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Kent on Sunday

www.kentnews.co.uk March 12, 2017

Mid edition No 755

MONEY

Reaction to first budget from chancellor

Mixed reaction to economic announcements

BUSINESS

Of Paramount importance

We quiz project's CEO on just when the £3billion park will be built

EVENTS

Oyster festival reduced to a shell for 2017

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Why park chiefs need to start delivering on vows

FOR a project which has yet to deploy a digger with any purpose, the London Paramount Resort has kept the county enthralled now for some years.

It promises jobs, facilities and, most significantly, a business which resembles nothing short of a pleasure palace. What's there not to like about it?

The answer is that if it goes ahead, then we'll all be celebrating, after all, it's rare Kent's big spending isn't on some form of massive transport infrastructure to make it easier for people to travel through the county en route to the continent or London, normally at the expense of those living here. This would be something we could all be proud of while transforming an old cement site.

Yet the delays are becoming something the team behind the project need to be acutely aware of as it is having a growing impact on public confidence. Not so long ago they said building work would begin in 2016 and the park open for business in 2019. Now that opening date is 2022. Granted, it's only five years away, but the whole project appears to be permanently five years away from seeing the light of day and it cannot help but breed doubts. Especially when those cheerleaders for the project seem to quit at such regular intervals. It begs the question, why leave a project with such apparent seismic potential?

When it was first announced almost everyone I spoke to said the same thing, all of which was along the common theme of "I'll believe it when I see it". Granted, that may just be a rather pessimistic view, but if that tone seeps out to investors you can only worry. This week we sat down with the project's new CEO and asked him just what is going on - yet for all the positive talk any further delays may just see it finally lose that vital public enthusiasm.

Editor **Chris Britcher**

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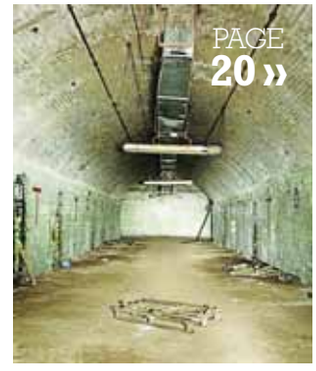

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Stories which made the headlines @kentnews.co.uk during the past week

MP warns of road chaos when Brexit is triggered

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

PREPARED: But Charlie Elphicke insists we can avoid problems by investing in Kent's transport infrastructure

THE 14-hour queues suffered by holidaymakers in Dover last summer are "a tea party" compared to what will happen if Kent is not ready for Brexit, an MP has warned.

Charlie Elphicke is calling for more investment in infrastructure on the county's roads if we are to avoid a repeat of the events of August 2016. And he demanded the Lower Thames Crossing is "built quickly".

Drivers trying to cross the Channel into France were stuck in sweltering heat, as heightened security checks in light of recent terror attacks caused delays heading into Calais.

A lack of staffing on the part of the border authorities was widely accepted as the main cause of the disruption.

At the time, Mr Elphicke criticised the government for not being prepared, after the Port of Dover had warned of such a situation developing, and the constituency MP has again called for greater preparation ahead of Britain's planned departure from the Europe-an Union in two years' time.

"In my constituency of Dover last summer we had a taster of what will come if we are not ready," Mr Elphicke told MPs.

"We saw queues of traffic all the way down the motorways, and some say that that was a tea party compared with what will happen if we are not ready.

"That is why I am making the case again today for more and faster investment in lorry parks off the M20, for widening and strengthening the M20, for dualling the A2 and for the Lower Thames Crossing.

"We need the infrastructure in the Channel ports as well to make sure that we are ready on day one.

"I know that there are Labour members who look forward to that day, and who like to warn about it and, frankly, feast on it - I take a different view. We need to be ready and prepared so that the worst does not happen.

"That is why I call for investment to be brought forward, for the Lower Thames Crossing to be built quickly, and for us to get on with it.

"We should make an investment in the Port of Dover that is similar to, and greater than, that which we have most graciously made in Calais in recent years.

"It is time we put Britain, and Britain's border, at the forefront of our policy."

Record-breaking Kent Big Weekend sparks massive ticket rush

THOUSANDS of people across the county this week learned if they had been lucky enough to secure free tickets in the annual giveaway for Kent's Big Weekend.

Entries for tickets closed last Friday and a record 184,143 applications were received - that's 60,000 more than the previous best - for the 22,000 pairs of tickets available.

Organised by tourism champions Visit Kent, the event is designed to encourage those who live here to visit local attractions - and then spread the word when friends visit.

Now in it 11th year, the tickets all apply for the weekend of April 1-2.

Visit Kent's marketing expert Sinead Hanna said: "We're over-whelmed by the huge support we've had from so many attractions across Kent, and the enthusiastic response from Kent residents who have been delighted to see the return of the Big Weekend this spring.

"The fact that we have once again broken all previous records for participation, tickets offered and applications is certainly a great cause for celebration.

"Every year brings along new and exciting opportunities for our residents to experience Kent's exceptional range of days out."

The Kent Big Weekend is part of English Tourism Week, which highlights tourism as one of the fastest growing sectors in the national economy.

Attractions have also donated extra tickets to the Family Holiday Association charity, which helps struggling families to enjoy a day out for free.

The most popular attractions for those seeking tickets were Wingham Wildlife Park, Howletts, Port Lympne, Rare Breeds Centre, Hever Castle, Wildwood, Diggerland, Leeds Castle, the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch railway and Kent Life.

Some tickets remain available - to see if any remain, visit www.kentbigweekend.co.uk.

One charged following death in Tunbridge Wells car park

A 34-year-old man appeared in court on Friday after being charged with murder following the death of a man in Tunbridge Wells.

The victim, believed to be in his 40s, was found in the early hours of Tuesday in a stairway on the first floor of the Torrington Road car park in the town centre.

A formal identification is expected to take place within one to two weeks.

Dean Lewise, of no fixed address, appeared before Medway magistrates by video link.

A second man arrested in connection with the death has been released without charge.

Police are continuing to appeal for anyone with information to come forward by contacting them on 01622 604100.

Leisure centre closed after fire crews tackle big blaze

AN investigation has been launched after fire ripped through a leisure centre in Northfleet in the early hours of Friday morning.

Emergency teams were called to the Cygnet Leisure Centre on Old Perry Street after fire alarms were triggered. No-one was in the building at the time and no-one is reported as injured.

Now a probe is under way into what caused the blaze.

A Gravesham Borough Council spokesperson said: "At the moment, the extent of the damage is unknown but we are working with Gravesham Community Leisure Limited to get Cygnet back open as soon as possible. The facilities at the council's other facility, Cascades Leisure Centre in Thong Lane, are open as usual."

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Petition for junction to be Dave Cash Corner

A CAMPAIGN has been launched to rename a key Kent roundabout after the county's legendary DJ Dave Cash.

The former Radio One presenter, who lived in Hollingbourne before his death aged 74 last year, was frequently spotted by fans using the roundabout off junction eight of the M20 in Maidstone and mentioned it frequently on his BBC Radio Kent show.

Explains fan Anna Bond, who has collected more than 200 signatures calling for it to be called Dave Cash Corner: ''We feel that to rename this roundabout would be one of the many ways we can remember Dave Cash for years to come.''

The online petition will be presented to MP Helen Grant.

Fifty roads see speed limits slashed to 20mph in bid to ease rat runs

By Chris Murphy
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ONE of the biggest 20mph zones in the county has gone live, with 50 streets in Tunbridge Wells dropping speed limits in a bid to cut down the risk of pedestrians - especially school children - being hit by cars.

Residents in and around the St John's area had become worried their roads had become a rat-run during rush-hours - now the roads which take in schools from Skinners to St John's Primary and St Augustine's Roman Catholic School have dipped from 30mph to 20mph.

Concerns were particularly raised when one car was clocked at 87mph along Newlands Road.

Now council chiefs have invested £40,000 on the scheme.

County and borough councillor Peter Oakford explained: "We really need to help and support residents to make these rat-run roads safer in the mornings and evenings."

Tunbridge Wells council said it backs the scheme and hopes it will slow drivers down and obey the new laws.

DROP: 20mph zone is now in force

A spokesman said: "This was a residents led scheme and we have been working with Kent County Council to put it in place."

However, there have been concerns expressed.

A spokesman for the Kent branch of the Alliance of British Drivers said: "We are not opposed to 20 mph speed limits in all locations. For example, where the natural speed of traffic is near that speed already. However we are opposed to blanket wide area 20 mph limits because they are not a cost effective road safety measure, are not likely to be complied with and needlessly slow traffic.

"In general the benefits of 20 mph signed area wide area schemes are grossly exaggerated. The average reduction in the speed of traffic is typically about one mph.

"That speed reduction is not likely to have a significant or measureable impact on road traffic accidents and not have any impact on the general environment of the roads concerned. Neither is it likely to encourage cycling or walking or discourage driving so the general health benefits will be nil - indeed there is no good evidence yet available for any such positive benefits."

SUCCESS: Council picks up award

Sevenoaks is crowned top local authority

SEVENOAKS District Council has been named council of the year at a prestigious awards for local authorities.

It beat off tough competition to win the crown at the 2017 Local Government Chronicle Awards (LGC).

At a ceremony, hosted by Sir Trevor McDonald, in London, the council was celebrated for achieving financial self-sufficiency, changing cultures and "doing things differently".

The council has so far purchased a petrol station, office space, convenience store and a former Working Men's Club and car park, and is currently developing its own hotel.

Council leader Peter Fleming, said: "To win such a prestigious award is a very proud moment for the whole Sevenoaks District Council team, both councillors and officers. It is also an enormous honour as it represents the hard work and difficult decisions we have been making for many years."

Judge Andrew Jepp, managing director of Zurich Municipal, said the council had shown "entrepreneurship with civic purpose" and demonstrated a clear, focused long-term vision to help residents.

He added: "Sevenoaks is a radical, hugely impressive organisational development."

Dealer who preyed on vulnerable jailed

A HEROIN dealer who targeted vulnerable people at a drug rehabilitation centre in Tunbridge Wells has been jailed for three years.

Shaun Belifante, 21, of St Mary Cray, Orpington, was arrested on January 11 after he was seen by officers acting suspiciously, whilst driving a car between the town centre and Southborough.

When the white Mini Cooper was searched, heroin and cocaine divided into 70 wraps was found hidden in a void underneath the gear stick.

Mobile phones were seized from the vehicle, while £15,000 in cash was found from properties linked to him.

One phone also showed Belifante had searched for the address of a local drug rehabilitation service, raising suspicions he was looking for vulnerable people to try and sell drugs to.

Belifante appeared before Maidstone Crown Court for sentencing, having previously pleaded guilty to charges of possession with intent to supply heroin and crack cocaine.

Car park fees rise for first time in six years

PARKING charges across Ashford and Tenterden will be increased for the first time in six years, as the council prepare to bring in concactless parking payment services.

Tariffs in council-owned car parks will increase by 10 per cent from April 1. Those with season tickets or parking permits will not be affected by the increase.

Charges for short stay parking will rise by 10p per hour, bringing the majority of fares up to £1.10 per hour.

Brad Bradford, Ashford councillor and portfolio holder for highways, said: ''The tariffs not only reflect the current economic climate, but they are on par with neighbouring authorities' rates.

''Any surplus generated helps to support council projects, which helps keep Ashford's council tax the lowest in the county.

''As part of the council's commitment to driving footfall into the town centre and supporting our local businesses, we continue to offer our residents and visitors free parking across the borough at certain times in select council-run car parks.''

MRI scanner boost for patients at K&C

A £4m investment to deliver two new scanners at Kent and Canterbury Hospital will cut patients' waiting times and produce higher-quality images for doctors, health bosses say.

East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, which last week exited quality special measures, has pumped the cash into a new Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) unit at the hospital.

MRIs take detailed images of the inside of almost every part of the body. Doctors use the scan results to help diagnose conditions, plan treatments and assess how effective previous treatment has been.

Building work has begun on the new unit, which will include an extra MRI scanner, a replacement for the existing one, and renovation of the inpatient and outpatient waiting areas. East Kent Hospitals' radiology general manager, Colin Fell, said: ''The is a wonderful addition to the services we already provide, and the new unit as a whole will help to reduce MRI wait times, and improve medical imaging services across the region.''

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Margate named in national paper's 'best places to live' list

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

MARGATE's continued revitalisation received another major shot in the arm this weekend when it was named one of the best places to live in the south east.

The Sunday Times Best Places to Live guide today declares the Thanet seaside resort as one of just 15 locations in the region to be highlighted. It is also the only one in Kent.

The inclusion follows assessment of a wide range of factors, from jobs, exam results and broadband speed to culture, community spirit and local shops in order to compile the definitive top locations to make your home.

The methodology relies on hard data and robust statistics on crime and education, but also on expert knowledge from The Sunday Times judging panel.

The judges combine the numbers with their own experience of the villages, towns and cities, such as local pubs, ease of transport and the range of attractive property to ensure the chosen locations truly are places where readers and their families can thrive.

The Turner Contemporary gallery has been hailed as one of the driving forces behind Margate's regeneration in recent years, with the return of the Dreamland leisure complex also championed by political figures as a reason for a change in fortunes.

PRAISE: Town named on Sunday Times list published this weekend

Home editor Helen Davies said: "This is the fifth year we have compiled the list, and this year's is even bigger and better - the guide is more personal, more detailed and more comprehensive than ever before.

"The list weighs up everything from considering the likely impact of the local plan, to whether the post office is still open, the range of housing, and the quality of the coffee.

"Numbers on a spreadsheet can only tell us so much, so we carefully balance statistics with our writers' decades of knowledge and expertise to create the definitive list of the best places to live in the UK."

Other towns listed include Crowborough, Wadhurst and Hove in East Sussex, Farnham and Godalming in Surrey, Finchamsptead in Berkshire, Tadley, Hambledon, Stockbridge and Lymington in Hampshire, Harpenden and St Albans in Hertfordshire, Marlow in Buckinghamshire and Wallingford in Oxfordshire.

Baby assaulted by man high on cocaine

A MAIDSTONE 26-year-old who assaulted a baby while high on cocaine has been jailed for nearly three years.

Steven Butler, formerly of York Road, had initially denied causing a catalogue of injuries to the baby, who in 2015 required medical treatment at Tunbridge Wells Hospital after reportedly coughing up blood. He changed his plea to guilty and was jailed for two years and eight months.

Water main burst hits Seven Mile Lane

MOTORISTS using Seven Mile Lane in Peckham can expect to continue facing delays until this Monday, after a water main burst.

As a result there are now two-way temporary signals between Royden Hall Road and Old Church Lane to enable emergency repairs to be carried out by South East Water.

Cops' 10 minute case

POLICE intercepted a stolen car just 10 minutes after it was stolen in Chatham this week.

At 12.07pm on Wednesday the Toyota Avenis was reported as pinched from Bryant Street. By 12.15pm it was spotted and stopped and the driver arrested.

The car was subsequently returned to its owner, undamaged.

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Patients set to beam results of blood treatment online

A PIONEERING technology is set to be rolled out by Medway health chiefs to allow those with long-term medical conditions to monitor their conditions at home - rather than time-consuming trips to local hospitals or GPs.

Medway Community Healthcare has partnered with digital health firm Inhealthcare to roll out a method by which warfarin patients can safely and securely transmit health readings to their doctors or nurse and receive dosing instructions. Warfarin is a leading oral anticoagulant - a medicine that stops blood clotting.

Bryn Sage, chief executive of Inhealthcare, said: "Our technology helps people with long-term conditions to lead more independent lives. Instead of attending regular appointments at hospital or clinic just to provide basic indicators and receive simple information, patients can now harness the power of technology to do this remotely using their smartphones, computers or landlines."

Sandra Chapman, Medway Community Healthcare clinical lead in anti-coagulation, said: "We will start to use the technology in April."

Scott's delight as firearm licensing time is slashed

A CONTROVERSIAL £39,000 investment made to help clear a backlog of firearms licenses has proved positive, Kent's police and crime commissioner has said.

Matthew Scott requested an update on the turnaround times at his most recent governance board meeting, the principle way he holds the chief constable to account in public and was told the force has significantly cut the time it takes to issue licenses and process renewals.

"When I arrived there was an issue about the length of time it was taking for renewals, and for grants of new certificates," Mr Scott said.

"We acknowledge the legitimate concerns of people just trying to register a firearm with us to comply with what are, quite rightly, strict gun laws.

"The fact that people were having to wait was unfair on them."

Kent has more than 25,000 firearms licence holders who must apply for a renewal every five years.

After receiving complaints about the time police took to process applications, Mr Scott released £39,000 in May 2016 for an additional member of staff to improve the situation.

It represented a significant change in policy to his predecessor, Ann Barnes, who last year hit out at the level of spending by the forces on firearms licences.

In 2015, firearms cost Kent Police some £338,556, causing Mrs Barnes to slam the spending, describing it as a "hobby subsidy".

Menagerie cages fixed

THREE rare and historic menagerie cages at Margate's Dreamland have been restored.

The structures, which date from 1874, are almost all that remain of the original Hall-by-the-Sea Pleasure Garden, now known as Dreamland. It will be accessible to the public as part of the park's revamp.

Markets combine forces

HEADCORN farmers' and collectors' markets have combined to become the Headcorn Country Market.

It will be held on the second Saturday of each month at Headcorn Village Hall from 9.30am to 1pm. The first took place this Saturday.

A20 pedestrian works

WORK runs from Tuesday to March 30 on improvements to the pedestrian crossing at the Union Street junction of the A20 at Dover - including new 'smart' traffic lights.

It means a lane will be close between Union Street and York Street junctions from 6am to 6pm.

Secamb chief quits early

THE outgoing acting chief executive of Kent's ambulance trust, Geraint Davies, departed on Thursday - three weeks earlier than initially planned.

He left the South East Coast Ambulance Service for 'personal reasons'. Daren Mochrie takes over in April.

Sheep worrying warning

By Emily King
emily.king@archant.co.uk

DOG owners are being urged to ensure their pets are kept under control as lambing season approaches - and reminded farmers are within their rights to shoot and kill dogs which cause distress to their flocks.

Traditionally, lambing starts in early spring and is a sign of the changing of the seasons.

But it also is a time of anxiety for farmers, if dogs are allowed to trouble their sheep.

PC Daniel Perry from Kent Police's rural task force explained: "This is extremely upsetting for the farmers and also the animals, which at this time of year are often pregnant with lambs.

"We only recently had a report of sheep attacks at a farm in Sandwich Bay and would like to take this opportunity to remind all dog walkers across the county to keep their pets on leads at all times of the year when walking through rural areas.

"Sheep represent a farmer's income and are often worth a substantial sum. If attacked, the veterinary bills that farmers face can leave them substantially out of pocket. And it doesn't stop there. Dogs can spread harmful parasites to sheep and cattle too, which could ultimately affect a whole herd."

PROTECT: Pregnant sheep can lose their lambs and farmers their valuable livestock so keep dogs under control

The rural team regularly visit farms and patrol rural communities. Officers say they deal with every incident separately and will take action to prosecute or seek resolution wherever possible.

PC Perry added: "Dog owners or people in charge of dogs can be sued for damages to recompense a farmer's loss. Anyone who witnesses sheep being chased or attacked should report it immediately to the police by calling 999."

Under the Animals Act 1971, a person acting to protect livestock may be able to kill or injure a dog they reasonably believes is 'worrying' without incurring any criminal or civil liability.

As a dog owner or a person in charge of a dog, you could be committing an offence if your pet worries livestock on agricultural land.

Worrying includes attacking or chasing livestock in a way that might reasonably be expected to cause injury, suffering or loss. It is also an offence to have a dog in a field or enclosed space where there are sheep when the dog is not on a lead or under close control.

Woman's body in reservoir

HUMAN remains found in a reservoir have been confirmed of those of a woman who was murdered 20 years ago.

Gwent Police said DNA testing showed the remains discovered in Wentwood Reservoir, near Newport, South Wales, last month were 53-year-old Sandie Bowen.

Her husband, Mike, served 15 years of a life sentence after killing her in 1997 but has never revealed where he hid her body. He claimed he had dropped her off in Newport so she could travel to Folkestone to visit their daughter.

Uni hosts free TS Eliot talk

A LEADING expert on the life and works of TS Eliot will deliver a free lecture at the University of Kent's Canterbury campus on Wednesday.

Professor Marina Warner of the University of London, will discuss the work of the poet in the context of stories about migration as the TS Eliot Memorial Lecture.

It takes place at the Grimond building at the Canterbury campus. It runs between 6.30pm and 7.45pm.

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Hammond under fire in fallout from first budget

Tom Tugendhat criticised increased NI contributions for the self-employed as other county MPs were slammed by the opposition for trumpeting a budget policy already implemented by KCC

By Tom Pyman
Tom.Pyman@archant.co.uk

CONSERVATIVE Kent MPs have been been slammed as "out of touch" for trumpeting the chancellor's announcement of free transport for the poorest grammar school pupils - when it already exists in the county.

In his spring budget on Wednesday afternoon, Philip Hammond said he would extend free transport for all children on free school meals, or whose parents are on the Maximum Working Tax Credit, to their closest selective schools, if it is between two and 15 miles away from their home.

Addressing MPs in the House of Commons, Mr Hammond said: "We understand that choice is the key to excellence in education.

"But we recognise that for many parents the cost of travel can be a barrier to exercising that choice.

"Pupils typically travel three times as far to attend selective schools, so we will extend free school transport to include all children on free school meals who attend a selective school.

"Because we are resolved that talent alone should determine the opportunities a child enjoys."

The announcement received the backing of Ashford MP and work and pensions secretary, Damian Green, who tweeted: "Hugely welcome in Kent," while Damian Collins added: "Providing extra support for children on free school meals to travel to selective schools is great news for families in Folkestone".

However, official Kent County Council documents say children in the care of KCC and children from low income families, who are entitled to receive free school meals, will receive transport assistance to the nearest grammar school in a number of circumstances.

KCC says to receive transport assistance, the child must have met the entry requirements of the grammar school, have been offered a place at the school, the school must be the nearest school of that type to their home and the distance from their home and the school must be between two and 15 miles.

It is understood the local authority currently receives just over £1m so any extra government cash to help subsidise this service will be welcomed.

In response, deputy Labour leader on KCC, and Sittingbourne councillor, Roger Truelove, told KoS: "The council does give free transport to free school meal children even if the grammar school is not the nearest available school, and from September that will also include children qualifying for pupil premium.

"There was a select committee of the KCC last year, chaired by [Conservative KCC councillor] Jenny Whittle and on which I was the one Labour member, that looked into the whole question of lack of social mobility in grammar school places in Kent.

"This announcement really is not anything to be welcomed in Kent and I don't know why Damian Green calls it good news.

"They clearly don't know what the KCC policy is and they appear to be out of touch."

The chancellor's announcement came as part of a larger investment in education, in which Mr Hammond has pledged more than half a billion pounds to be pumped into creating new free schools, including grammars, and refurbishing existing school buildings.

Elsewhere, in the face of rising business rates, expected to hit small firms in Kent hard, Mr Hammond announced funding for local authorities, which will allow them to provide £300m of discretionary relief to provide help to businesses most affected by the revaluation.

Though, naturally, the slice of this likely to be received by town halls in the county will be a mere fraction.

And from April 2017, pubs with a rateable value up to £100,000 will be able to claim a business rates discount for one year, Mr Hammond said.

CRITICISM: It was branded a 'boring budget' initially, but the chancellor has come under scrutiny in the fallout

Conservative MP Helen Whately said: "Overall businesses in Faversham and mid Kent are seeing the rates they pay fall, but some, particularly pubs, told me they were set for steep increases.

"I met the chancellor a few weeks ago and pressed him to help pubs out, so I'm delighted that he's listened to me, and others, and is giving 90 per cent of all pubs a £1,000 discount on business rate bills."

However, the biggest controversy was his U-turn on a 2015 Conservative manifesto pledge after he announced self-employed workers would suffer a two per cent hike in national insurance contributions by 2019, claiming the current system was "not fair to the 85 per cent of workers who are employees".

The chancellor appears to be facing a backbench revolt from MPs within his own party, including Tom Tugendhat, who represents Tonbridge and Malling.

"I find the emphasis on national insurance slightly concerning," he said.

"I come from a political tradition that believes in small government and low taxes and that seeks to encourage entrepreneurship and enterprise.

"Although the figures that we are discussing are very minor — a percentage point here and there, or two over two years — they speak in a tone that is not entirely helpful, and in that I urge a rethink.

"We should be encouraging the self-employed, start-ups and people who are taking risks and carrying those risks themselves.

"We should recognise that through support, yes, but we should do so, particularly through taxation."

Jo James, chief executive of Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, told KoS: "Many local entrepreneurs and sole traders will be shocked to see significant rises to their NI bills over the coming years. Ministers need to ensure these business people, the heartbeat of the local economy get the recognition, support and benefit they deserve."

Craig Harman is a tax specialist at the Tunbridge Wells-based, Perrys Chartered Accountants.

He said: "The increase in Class 4 NI contributions for the self-employed would appear to be a blatant breach of the government's manifesto pledge from two years ago.

"This will leave those worst affected out of pocket by £700 per year come 2019 when the 11 per cent rise kicks in."

Leader of the Labour opposition on Medway Council, Vince Maple, added: "The Conservative government's national insurance increase on the self-employed will hit a large amount of Medway's workforce, many of whom are already affected by benefit reductions.

"This effectively continues a decade without real earnings growth, as the independent Institute For Fiscal Studies stated 'one cannot stress enough how dreadful that is'.

"Failed Tory austerity has produced a low wage, low investment, high debt economy."

Social care has been the subject of much scrutiny in recent months, with both KCC and Medway Council chiefs insisting more funds are drastically needed to address growing demand for services in the face of cuts to grants from central government.

Communities secretary Sajid Javid announced before Christmas the ability for local authorities to increase the 'social care precept' on council tax bills from two per cent to three per cent - an option taken up by Medway last month, but not KCC.

However, both leaders have said the increase barely covered salary rises for staff under the National Living Wage, though the chancellor did announce £2bn of funding for social care over the next three years.

Oyster event dramatically reduced for this summer

Details were confirmed this week of extensive cut-backs to the Whitstable festival amid concerns from residents

CROWDS: Tens of thousands descend on the seaside town for the festival, but 2017 will be a far smaller event

By Tom Pyman
Tom.Pyman@archant.co.uk

THERE are no plans to cancel the world-famous Whitstable Oyster Festival, despite details emerging this week of a drastically scaled-back event for 2017.

The annual festival, which has helped put the seaside town on the map, will this year abandon its traditional roots in the harbour and instead move to Tankerton Slopes, in a three-day event in which the popular fireworks display, open-air cinema and famous oyster parade have all being scrapped.

The decision comes after Canterbury City Council officials received dozens of complaints last year over fears the event was spiralling out of control and alienating local residents.

Drunk and anti-social behaviour, excessive littering and over-crowding were among the 43 objections received by the council following the 2016 festival, which led some residents to admit they felt "unsafe".

Instead, the focus will be shifted to more traditional activities, with the landing of the oysters and the oyster-eating competition remaining on the bill.

Suggestions fewer people will visit and pump money into the local economy as a result have been dismissed, with officials taking a positive approach to the change.

Council leader Simon Cook told KoS: "My understanding is this is a transitional move – we are taking stock of things and rather than saying we should not have a festival at all, we are looking at having it on a more restricted basis for one year, while we have a really good look at how it's going to work going forward.

"If you stop for a year, it's harder to restart again afterwards.

"It's fabulous that the festival is so successful and people come from far and wide to enjoy it, but ultimately the questions are 'is this what Whitstable wants?' and 'can Whitstable cope?'.

"We don't want to lose it at all, but do the people of Whitstable want the core, traditional events like the landing of the oysters, or do they want it to be a bigger event that brings more people to the town?

"That's for them to decide, it's not a case of Canterbury City Council knows best.

"Nobody is talking about there not being a festival, there is an absolute desire for people to celebrate the thing they are known internationally for – it's just a question of on what scale that takes place."

A consultation into the future of the oyster festival, Canterbury Food and Drink Festival and the Herne Bay Festival closed earlier this month, where residents were given the opportunity to help shape the events in future.

The council has said an officer group has been set up to ensure a more proactive approach to licensing, enforcement, waste and parking for the duration of the 2017 event, with the aim of avoiding a repeat of last year's issues.

Kent County Council's economic development chief, Mark Dance, who lives in the seaside town, agreed changes needed to be made to create a more local focus.

"It's pulling right back, starting again and reinventing itself, which I think is a good thing," he said.

"It got out of control, and what did it for me was young people turning up at Whitstable station with carrier bags full of booze – how on earth do you pick up a broken bottle?

"We have got so much to offer and we should be showcasing it.

"It's very popular but we shouldn't be forgetting our residents, because when the festival is on people don't go into the town and that's crazy.

"It will be better for traders during the festival, because there were people last year selling drink on the harbour, when 100 yards down the road you have a pub, paying business rates, but seeing someone else stealing their customers."

Conservative MP for Canterbury, Julian Brazier, added: "They needed to have a reasonable compromise.

"It's a big part of Whitstable's culture and helps bring in tourists and money to local shops and businesses, but in the last couple of years we have seen quite serious excesses and residents are clearly fed up with that.

"I don't think traders will be too heavily affected because a huge number of people collecting at night is not doing much for the high street in general, other than for a few pubs.

"This is a sensible attempt to make that compromise."

Mark Stubbs, head chef at Wheelers Oyster Bar on the high street, told KoS it was impossible to predict the impact on local businesses but admitted he was disappointed at the prospect of a smaller festival this year.

"I don't know what business will be like for us, I don't have a crystal ball to see whether it will be right or wrong for the town," he said.

"But the festival has been a big part of Whitstable and it's a shame to see it scaled back because the whole point is to bring families and especially children together to celebrate.

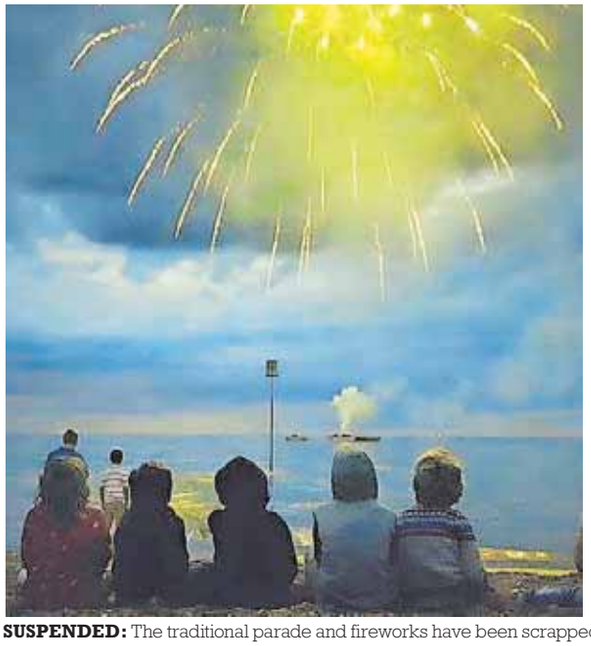
"A lot of businesses used to do things and put on special events during the festival so we'll have to see if they still do that over just three days.

"No one wants to see the town looking a mess or seeing trouble but if it's done in a controlled environment, it can have a massive impact."

A report into disturbance at the festival last year noted the majority of the complaints "were not directed at the core festival activities but rather other secondary activities within the town that may have intentionally or unintentionally been promoted or associated with a wider festival brand".

It added: "An unauthorised beach party has been suggested as the source for much of the antisocial behaviour and is currently being investigated."

This year's festival will run from Saturday, July 22 until Monday, July 24.



SUSPENDED: The traditional parade and fireworks have been scrapped from this year's festival line-up

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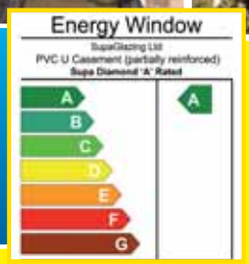

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Has ball finally started rolling on Paramount resort plans?

Tom Pyman sat down with the project's new CEO this week to dissect the delays so far, the impact of Brexit, the importance of the Lower Thames Crossing and whether we can really expect the complex to open in 2022 as planned

THE opening date for a multi-billion pound theme park in north Kent is now set for 2022, bosses have confirmed.

Chiefs behind the London Paramount Resort project, earmarked for the Swanscombe Peninsula and costing some £3.2bn, are set to submit a development consent order application in November, after suggesting 2017 was the year the plans really begin to accelerate.

The project has suffered a host of setbacks in recent years, which led to suggestions the resort - proposed to include rides, hotels, conference areas, entertainment venues and restaurants - may never actually materialise.

Then last month, London Resort Company Holdings (LRCH), the group behind the plans, announced an overhaul of its executive team, as David Testa departed as CEO to be replaced by Humphrey Percy.

Bosses were also forced to play down some fears in the press that a large Chinese backer would not invest as planned.

Now though, they insist momentum is growing and are confident of delivery in five years' time.

Speaking to KoS this week, Mr Percy said: "There were perhaps, with some good reason, thoughts we could have progressed more quickly.

"But we want to make sure we get a project of this scale and this size completely right, and therefore the consultations are very important.

"In some ways it's turned out to be good timing because with the referendum result and the government's statements that the UK is open for business and keen for people to come here and spend money, a project of this sort and magnitude will, by necessity and by definition, attract a lot of interest and will work quite well.

"With the depreciation of sterling in the last year, it's going to be more competitively priced in terms of foreigners coming here and also in terms of the number of people having 'staycations'.

"Our catchment area means there are 41 million people within four hours and we're targeting them but not just once, we want them to come again and again.

"Things today are quite different to how they were 20 or 30 years ago, people have multi-generational holidays: grandparents, parents and children go on holiday together and our idea is to provide an entertainment resort which will appeal to all ages."

London Paramount was the first commercial venture to receive Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) status, which will help speed up the usual lengthy planning process, in that central government is legally committed to respond to the application within 15 to 18 months of plans being submitted.

But it has so far been slow in progressing, with original announcements work could begin in 2016 and be completed by 2019. There are also anxieties from observers over financing, with LRCH confirming the money is only in place, so far, to get it to the point of construction. However, it insists funding at that stage should be relatively easy to secure.

Many, however, remain cautious. Despite the massive boost to the local economy, many businesses in the area have faced uncertainty for years and now see that continuing.

Dan Bramwell, of the Peninsula Management Group, set up to represent businesses affected by the plans, said there were far too many obstacles in the way for 2022 to be a realistic target.

"They have too much work to do to deliver a planning application this year," he told KoS.

"They are churning out the same old rubbish again and again. We are not against it, but we want to be respected."

Mr Percy said conversations between the parties are ongoing and another round of consultation will be held before the submission in November, though Mr Percy did not disclose exactly when that would take place.

The CEO also admitted that Brexit was not entirely beneficial to the project, and that leaving the European Union provided significant obstacles to overcome.

"It's a balance, because there will be additional costs in terms of importing materials," he said.

"The other thing that gives us pause for thought is that the construction industry as a whole is reliant on a large number of foreign workers.

"There is no doubt [Brexit] is in our minds, it would be wrong not to be, but we believe we will find a way and get it done."

A total of 33,000 jobs are expected to be created over the coming years - 17,000 in the resort itself, 10,000 indirectly and a further 6,000 jobs during the construction process.

Of these, particularly given the challenge that's likely to occur in recruiting from the EU, a number are of positions are expected to be filled locally to help drive down unemploy-

AMBITIOUS: Humphrey Percy (right, by Ady Kerry) says he will submit a planning application for the entertainment park in Swanscombe by November, but critics remain sceptical

ment in north Kent.

Due to being located outside the capital's boundaries and very much within the county, questions have been raised as to why the resort is referred to as London Paramount.

A suggestion has been that including 'London' rather than 'Kent' in the title makes the complex more marketable to a global audience, and Mr Percy admitted the logistics were largely being planned with the capital in mind.

"We feel that London has amazing tourist at-

Continued on page 16

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Continued from page 15

tractions, amazing history, culture and traditions but London and the UK lacks what is known as a grade one theme park destination resort," he said.

"The nearest we've got to it is Alton Towers which is more than four hours away.

"We believe London – the number one tourist destination in the world – will soon attract 35 million visitors a year by 2020, and with this theme park people will be able to have an experience 17 minutes from central London [on a high speed train from St Pancras].

"We want to promote the idea that this resort is part of a London experience.

"That's not to say it's not part of a Kent experience and we are working with the tourist authorities to make it part of the Kent fabric, however, we are targeting that 35 million number and that's what we want to achieve."

However, Mr Percy, who grew up in Hawkhurst and has a house in Penshurst, did say he wanted the project to "complement" some of the key attractions in his home county.

Speculation has also been rife as to the type of attractions that will feature at the resort, and LRCH confirmed agreements are in place with the BBC and Aardman Animations to use licences for popular characters in addition to the title deal with movie studio Paramount to use many of its major film franchises to brand rides and areas. The movie studio is not involved in anything other than name.

Transport and potential congestion caused by the development has been a major concern among locals, with traffic woes in Dartford and the surrounding areas well documented, particularly with the development of the Ebbsfleet garden city and expansion of Bluewater shopping centre nearby.

"We believe it can cope, we're working with the garden city and have done detailed traffic modelling studies," Mr Percy said.

"That is going to be a key part of our planning application to convey that."

A government decision on the Lower Thames Crossing - a bored tunnel earmarked for east of Gravesend, crossing the river into Essex - is expected imminently, and Mr Percy said that while the plans are not reliant on the crossing, it would be an essential part of the regeneration of north Kent.

The park's plans ruled out Option B - which could have seen a crossing via the peninsula - so there is already considerable political capital in the project proving a success.

Adds Mr Percy: "We seriously believe the crossing will ease the pressure on that junction between the A2, M25 and Dartford, which helps us because hopefully a lot of traffic will go to the east of us, so people will be approaching from the east rather than the majority of traffic coming from the west.

"We modelled to 2035 and if it doesn't happen at all, you've got to factor that possibility in.

"The expectation is that it's probably going to but it doesn't stop the ability to deliver what we're doing – it's certainly not reliant on it."

Initially, the resort aims to attract eight million visitors a year, but that number will almost double as the project progresses, opening a "second gate" [additional facilities] once the complex has begun to establish itself. "Ultimately, we're looking at 15 million visitors a year," the CEO said.

"We'll open the first gate in 2022, which will attract more than eight million visitors a year, and after a period of three or four years we will start on the second gate with a target of opening that in 2029.

"In order to take the project forward we have to factor in a much higher visitor number than eight million to demonstrate we can cope with that second gate and 15 million visitors.

"To put that into context, Bluewater today has 28.5 million visitors a year.

"A lot of those are people going regularly, but that's the footfall, so it's not a bad number to put in context of a theme park having eight up to 15 million visitors a year."

As well as rollercoasters, hotels, retail and dining facilities, the plans include some 14,000 car parking spaces, therefore more than Bluewater, with half as many anticipated annual visitors.

Talks are ongoing with rail chiefs in terms of both high speed and mainline trains, to improve connectivity, as well as better utilising the river, which project bosses have described as "one of our front doors".

The existing ferry service between Gravesend and Tilbury will be looked at and chiefs are also considering a boat service from central London and Greenwich down to the resort.

"It's exciting, and we want to be creative about getting people there and having a nice experience."

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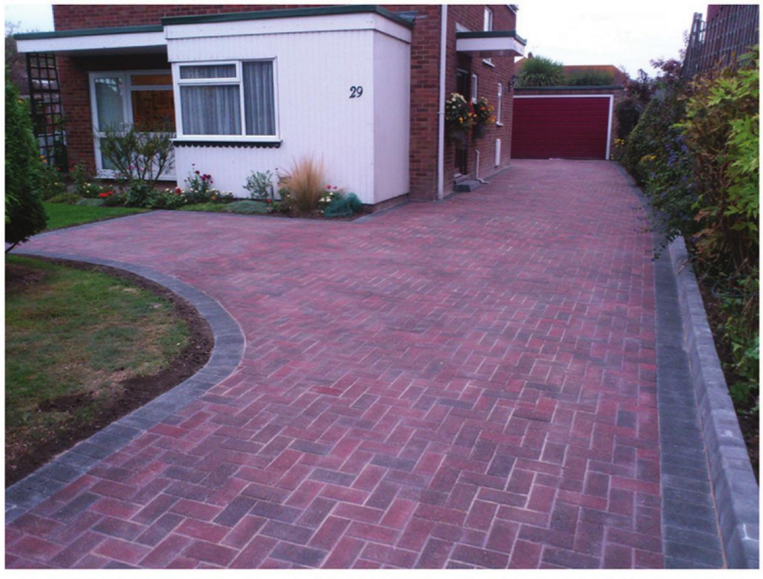

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Major push to swell the number of apprentices

Paul Carter called on local businesses to take on fresh, young talent ahead of changes to apprenticeship programme

By Tom Pyman
Tom.Pyman@archant.co.uk

A CAMPAIGN to encourage Kent employers to double the number of apprentices in the county to 22,000 by 2020 has been launched.

Spearheading the campaign, Kent County Council leader, Paul Carter, used a Made in Kent event at Shepherd Neame's brewery in Faversham to call on businesses to make the most of the significant changes being introduced on April 6 to the government's apprenticeship programme.

The levy requires all employers operating in the UK, with a pay bill over £3m each year, to invest in apprenticeships to help young people develop a range of new skills.

Cllr Carter also offered businesses KCC's assistance as they consider the implications and opportunities of the changes, announcing a new advice service for all Kent employers, to be delivered in partnership with leading apprenticeship training provider MiddletonMurray.

"The Made in Kent campaign is KCC's way of celebrating the success of apprentices across the county and promoting the considerable benefits they bring to employers large and small," he said.

"For the first time businesses can commission their own training, hire apprentices of any age, upskill their existing workforce and access training funding all through the apprenticeship programme.

"These changes make the scheme even more compelling than before, and on that basis, our ambition is to double the number of apprentices in Kent by 2019/20.

"I believe that the expanded apprenticeship programme is a fantastic opportunity for all Kent businesses and employees.

"It will facilitate considerable new investment in staff training and development, and do much to reduce the skills gap many businesses regularly report.

"KCC is committed to doing all we can to ensure that as many apprentices as possible continue to be Made in Kent and that the maximum amount of training funds available through the Apprenticeship Levy is spent in Kent, for the benefit of local businesses and people."

Cllr Carter told business leaders to leave the event "inspired" about the potential of apprenticeships, urging employers to work closely with KCC in understanding the levy.

SUPPORT: Kent County Council says it will help local businesses understand the apprenticeship levy coming in

Angela Middleton, CEO of MiddletonMurray, spoke of how the new levy would work and highlighted the opportunities available as a result of new funding available.

"MiddletonMurray have been working to make it easy for businesses in Kent to recruit, train and employ apprentices for many years and we are delighted to be supporting Kent County Council on this exciting new project," she said.

"We are on hand to help any employer who is yet to work out how to use levy funding and we will use our considerable experience to assist anyone using the KCC advice line to find the right solution to meet their business needs.

"No business should look at the apprenticeship levy as 'just another tax'.

"The money paid remains yours to use, and from our experience all businesses can benefit from the wide range of high quality, work relevant apprenticeship training opportunities now available.

"However, I would warn that employers need to take action now.

"Once the levy comes in, funds raised are available on a use it or lose it basis, and for many employers it will take a little time to get the right arrangements in place."

Jonathan Neame, chief executive of Shepherd Neame, which hosted the event said: "Like all businesses, we recognise the benefits apprenticeships can bring to the workplace.

"However, big initiatives like the levy can be daunting to organisations, in terms of cost and complexity, so it's great to have support from KCC and MiddletonMurray in implementing these changes."

Two apprentices spoke about their experiences at the event.

Dover-based Christopher North, a business administration apprentice at The Research Network said: "Becoming an apprentice offered me a great way to learn and earn.

"I didn't want to go to uni, but being an apprentice means I can still get qualifications and a good job, without the student debt."

Ellen-Paige Habbershaw, an apprentice at Patrick Carnell Contractors in Dover, added: "I'm very proud to be Made in Kent.

"I hope all employers give others opportunities like the one I've had, as my apprenticeship has started me on a brilliant career path."

Meanwhile, later in the week, chancellor of the exchequor, Philip Hammond announced plans to pump £500m of government cash into further education to ensure teenagers are genuinely "work-ready", following a review which concluded that students need a much clearer system of qualifications.

New 'T-levels' for 16 to 19 year old technical students will be introduced from autumn 2019 in which students will be able to choose from 15 different routes such as construction, digital or agriculture.

The number of hours of training for these students will increase by over 50 per cent, the goverment says, and as part of the course, all students will take part in an industry work placement.

The government will also provide maintenance loans for students doing higher-level technical courses at National Colleges and Institutes of Technology – like those available to university students.

Mr Hammond told MPs he was "putting the next generation first, to safeguard their future, and to secure our economy".

Graham Razey, principal of Canterbury College and East Kent College, told KoS: "This new funding is going to help deliver the skills our economy needs to continue growing.

"With the backdrop of Brexit, it is fantastic news that the government is investing in technical education, particularly given the productivity drop in the UK over the past two decades.

"It's also great news that T-Levels will be introduced, helping to ensure that technical and vocational training have the same parity as an academic education.

"This will ensure all of our young people have the same opportunities to achieve their potential."

Deputy Labour leader on KCC, Roger Truelove, also welcomed the investment.

"The most significant aspect of the budget from an economic point of view was the admission that our real problem is one of poor productivity, especially compared to Germany," he told KoS.

"The call to make technical education for post 16 students 'equal in esteem' to academic A levels is not only welcome, but vital.

"However, it has all been said before and we will only catch up with our competitors if we invest in buildings, equipment and, above all, teachers and lecturers.

"I can remember the Thatcher government introducing the Technical Vocational Education Initiative in the 1980s but it was a spectacular failure, not least because politicians, educators and parents didn't really believe in the concept of 'parity of esteem'."

See page 11 of this week's paper for more budget coverage.

INNOVATIVE: East Kent College welcomed the chancellor's investment in technical education

Revealed: The secret aircraft factory built underground

Amazing labyrinth in Medway could be turned into future tourist attraction

By Chris Murphy
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

DEEP underground in Medway a round-the-clock security operation is in place to protect a series of historic tunnels which housed a wartime aircraft factory with hopes one day it will become a tourist attraction.

Little is known about the spooky labyrinth somewhere under Rochester, but there is a dedicated team of experts who are regularly keeping an eye on things to ensure they are protected from both the elements and vandals.

It was built after the Short Brothers factory was bombed during the Battle of Britain in 1940. This was the base for their world famous seaplanes, which were deemed vital to the allied war effort.

In order to keep production moving, some of the operations were moved to Belfast, which the company had opened in 1936, and some of it went underground at a reported cost of some £20,000 (the equivalent of £1.17m today), much more than rebuilding another conventional factory, and also safer from Luftwaffe bombing runs. The tile-lined tunnels also doubled as an air raid shelter with corrugated iron sheets, similar to those used in Anderson Shelters, covering the top parts of the tunnels.

While the Napoleonic tunnels of Fort Amherst have been turned into a successful tourist attraction, no one has yet taken up the cause of creating another with the Shorts tunnels.

One of that team keen to keep the tunnels alive is Chris Rayner from Sevenoaks, a member of Subterranea Britannica, which studies and investigates man-made underground places like mines, railway tunnels, military defences and nuclear bunkers.

He told us: "Running under Rochester for nearly a mile there is a seemingly endless system of tunnels built by a remarkable individual who saw that war was coming and wanted to be prepared.

"Oswald Short was a 20th century pioneer. Together with his brothers in his early teens he'd started building first balloons and then aircraft right at the dawn of the age of flying at the turn of the century.

HIDDEN: Tunnels head off in all directions

"By the late 1930s he was now the sole survivor of the three brothers and in charge of a workforce of nearly 10,000 working out of the massive Shorts Seaplane Works strung out along the east bank of the Medway in Rochester, with slipways running into the river to allow them to launch their incredible aircraft.

"He'd seen the effect of enemy bombing in the First World War and now came up with a plan to protect both his workforce and allow some production of planes and components continue unabated even during heavy bombing.

"He would dig into the river bank running parallel with the river behind his factory, and then run a line of tunnels through the chalk at 90 degrees, which would allow workers, wherever they were in this factory, to reach cover within the few minutes between the air raid siren going off and the first bombers flying overhead."

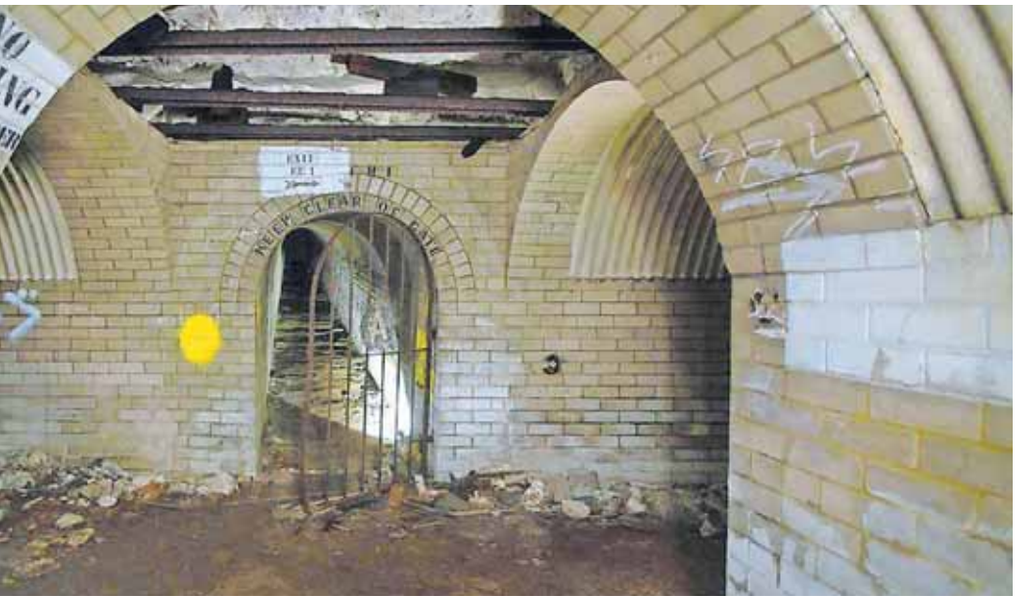
So what is so special about these tunnels and those three-storey high cavernous factories?

Mr Rayner said: "I've been inside hundreds of air raid shelter systems over the years but those at Shorts are still one of the ones I most admire.

"One can be with a group of other people but then, if you take a wrong turning, you can be on your own, in complete darkness and silence.

"In plan, the system looks almost like a praying mantis. The head, at the north end, contains little chambers with rusting metal gates. These were used to keep safe the company's treasures, its records and blueprints, keeping them away from the eyes of enemy spies and allowing them to survive even if an unlucky bomb or bombs destroyed a vital part of the plant.

"Next there's the familiar grid of



DEEP: Volunteers protect historic tunnels. All pictures: Chris Rayner

brick-lined tunnels that would have been used as air raid shelters by workers and possibly their families too. There is some fascinating graffiti there, sketches of flying boats and cartoon-like characters, as well as tallies of card games.

"He thought of everything. There was a well to provide fresh water, a sick bay often referred to as an underground hospital, an area for decontamination of workers affected by gas, who had to be quickly cleaned down before it did too much damage to their eyes and skin.

"There were the normal control rooms for the air raid wardens, who would have been staff volunteers.

"The King and Queen visited the site in March 1939, six months before war started, and visited the shelter. A newspaper report describes how 'the figure of the Queen dressed in a violet costume and hat trimmed with fur, was watched by many of the workpeople as it passed deeper into the well-lit burrow and at last vanished round a bend far into the heart of the hill'.

"But there was more to come. Oswald now decided he needed to have some parts of his plant protected from the interruption of raid alerts, mostly false alarms but still very unwelcome interruptions. He now got permission to build two massive chambers complete with mechanical ventilation at the south end of his site, linked through the northern air raid shelters by a 400m long connecting tunnel."

It was these that became astonishing underground factories.

Mr Rayner said these were shrouded in secrecy and despite his best efforts has failed to come up with any meaningful documentation about them.

He said: "I and others have looked for wartime pictures showing aircraft or aircraft component production at the factory end during the war but haven't managed to find anything. I can only assume it was too secret, or just too difficult to get a good picture underground."

It is thought there is some 12,000 square feet of space where men would toil underground preparing vital parts for the seaplanes which were completed in Belfast.

After the war and when Shorts moved entirely to Northern Ireland, another company moved in, and Blaw Knox used some of the tunnels as storage rooms.

A 1990s housing development followed and most of the entrances have since been blocked off.

David Carr was until recently the chairman of Medway Council's regeneration, community and culture overview and scrutiny committee which oversees local tourism.

He told us: "It sounds intriguing. I think this would make a good tourist attraction.

"Perhaps a trust could be set up like they did for Amherst - I think that is a really good idea.

"It does seem fascinating. The problem is as always if there is ever enough money around. The volunteer groups is something we could tap in to.

"No doubt about it, we can always organise volunteer groups and help them without spending a lot of money."

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Symbolic return of ship's bell 30 years after ferry tragedy

Memorial events took place on both sides of the Channel this week to mark the anniversary of a maritime disaster which claimed 193 lives on March 6, 1987

By Chris Britcher
chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

THE ship's bell from the Herald of Free Enterprise has been returned to Dover to honour the 193 victims of the Zeebrugge ferry disaster on its 30th anniversary.

At about 6pm on March 6 1987, the Townsend Thoresen roll-on, roll-off ferry turned over on its side outside Zeebrugge, Belgium, as it set out for Dover.

The bell was presented at a memorial service at St Mary the Virgin Church in Dover on Monday, attended by 400 people to remember those who died in what was the worst peacetime British maritime disaster in living memory.

Staff from the Port of Zeebrugge handed over the bell to Sailors' Society chief executive Stuart Rivers and Brian Gibbons, the last survivor to be pulled out alive.

Daniel Lamote, who was safety officer at the Port of Zeebrugge, said the bell had been kept in an attic and he had persuaded the owner to release it to him.

He said: "Our only intention was to bring the ship's bell where it belongs, St Mary's Church Dover, in honour of all of the victims, survivors, family and friends."

The former bishop of Liverpool, the Rt Rev James Jones, told the service: "The reliving and the remembrance, the quest and the questioning keep alive the love for the one who has died and give expression to their worth."

The governor of West Flanders, Carl Decaluwe and Mr Rivers exchanged video messages which were shown to the congregations in Dover and Zeebrugge.

Mr Decaluwe said: "Neither in Belgium, nor in the UK, have we forgotten the victims and rescuers of the Herald. We are today united in our commemoration."

In his message, Mr Rivers said: "Over the years we have been humbled to hear the most wonderful stories of heroism, tales of the most incredible courage from passengers and crew."

Among those attending was Kim

Spooner, whose aunt and uncle Neil 'Billy' Spooner, 37, and Mary Smith, 44, died after taking advantage of a cut-price day trip offer in a newspaper.

Ms Spooner, 38, from Essex, said: "I was eight years old at the time and I can remember it like it was yesterday.

"I knew that it was something absolutely terrible. The worst bit was waiting for news because we were obviously in a time when there were no mobile phones and no internet.

"For them, it was a spur of the moment trip. It wasn't a planned thing. It was fate. They could have gone the day before or the day after.

"Their deaths have completely affected my life, and how I form relationships. They were like a second mum and dad to me, and we were a really close-knit unit.

"I have never recovered from it to be honest.

"I get quite angry when I hear it described as a freak accident because it wasn't.

"There were people and corporations to blame. It's as simple as that."

A public inquiry severely criticised Townsend Thoresen, which later became P&O European Ferries, and confirmed the ferry had left Zeebrugge with its bow doors open, allowing water to flood the car deck, and the crew member responsible for closing them was asleep at the time.

Assitant bosun Mark Stanley awoke to find the ship capsizing. He immediately started to try and rescue passengers. However, the terrible toll of the tragedy - which had seen him hounded out of his Ashford home shortly after the disaster - took a massive toll on his health, career and family. He died last year aged just 58.

In October 1987, an inquest jury returned verdicts of unlawful killing.

A manslaughter trial began at the Old Bailey in September 1990 but collapsed a month later after the judge directed the jury to acquit the eight defendants.

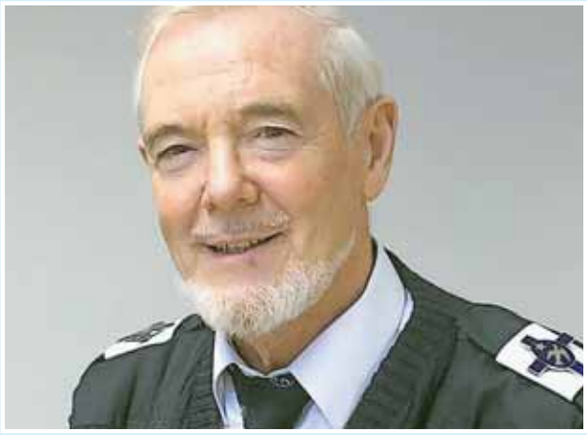
International ferry safety regulations were tightened after the disaster, but there were further changes when the ferry Estonia capsized in a

SERVICE: Families gathered in Dover to remember the 193 victims of the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise in 1987. The stricken vessel outside Zeebrugge is pictured above. All images: PA

severe storm in the north Baltic Sea in September 1994 with the loss of more than 900 lives.

Last Sunday, a service was held at St Donaas Church in Zeebrugge, jointly-led by the Reverend Alexander Eberson, chaplain of the Port of Zeebrugge, who said: "The disaster had a huge impact on Zeebrugge and still does."

CHAPLAIN REMEMBERS TERROR OF THAT NIGHT



RETIRED chaplain Bill McCrea will never forget the moment news filtered through of the Zeebrugge ferry disaster 30 years ago on March 6 1987.

As the Herald of Free Enterprise capsized, Mr McCrea was on duty as chaplain to the Merchant Navy and National Sea Training College in Gravesend.

Mr McCrea, 75, said: "I was with a number of the young trainees as well as several crew members of the Herald who were at the college studying.

"When the men realised it was their ship they became deeply anxious. The only reason they weren't on board was because they were at the college studying for their efficient deck hand certificate."

Later that evening, Mr McCrea heard the devastating news that the disaster had resulted in a large loss of life, and he travelled to Dover where he spent two weeks offering support.

"I have dealt with individual loss of life with seafarers' families over the years, but it was the enormity of the situation," he said. "So many people lost their lives that night."

Retired Sailors' Society port chaplain Mr McCrea recalled the individual tragedies involving people he knew, including a 17-year-old boy who died in the disaster just two weeks after finishing nautical college.

Mr McCrea went on to conduct the boy's funeral service and comforted his family as they struggled to come to terms with their enormous loss.

"As much as I ministered to his family, they ministered to me, too," he said. He also spoke of the torment some families endured waiting for recovery of their loved ones' bodies.

He said: "One woman, whose husband I buried, had to wait six weeks before they found his body. I gave her all the support I could during that time.

"Who can train you for that? Not even theological training. You depend upon the grace of God.

"The families were a great support to me. I was there for them but they reciprocated that and as a result I got to know them really well."

Mr McCrea officiated at four funeral services, and supported passengers who had survived. He went on: "All the services I held were attended by crew who survived.

"It was part of their shared grief. I met a woman on one of my hospital visits. She lost her husband that night.

"She told me the only reason she survived was that a truck driver helped keep her awake by pinching her.

"There were a lot of heroic acts that went on that night."

"No one wants to be involved in this sort of tragedy and it was a big strain on me at the time, but supporting those I did is a great honour," he said.

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CONFIRMED: Damon Albarn is no stranger to Margate - Blur played a show there in August 2012 which sold out in minutes.

It's all a blur as Gorillaz set to be Dreamland's headliner

The 2D virtual band will top Demon Dayz festival at Margate venue in June

A LITTE over a week after unveiling a 15,000 capacity venue within its grounds, Dreamland in Margate has secured one of the biggest live shows of the summer.

Tickets went on sale on Friday for the Demon Days festival - a one-day show which will be headlined by Gorillaz.

The group, created by Blur frontman Damon Albarn and the artist Jamie Hewlett, best known for his Tank Girl creation, will play at the park on June 10.

A full line-up of support acts is set to be confirmed in the coming weeks, but is likely to be extensive. The venue's gates will open at 2pm and ticket holders will get free access to the park's rides during the event.

The band are certainly far from a normal group.

Described as a 2D virtual band, they consist of characters drawn by Hewlett, with a star-studded live band performing beneath.

That band has included the likes of The Clash members Mick Jones and Paul Simonon, The Verve's former guitarist Simon Tong and Cass Browne from 1990s indie band The Senseless Things.

For Dreamland, the coup is it being a band with a loyal fan base and their first UK show in seven years.

The band has only played sporadically live since then, with Albarn hinting he would perhaps not be returning to the band any time soon.

However, last year the group started to make noises on social media and Albarn revealed he had new material which could see the light of day during 2016. That passed, but the momentum started to grow and in January the group's first recorded output for five years was released with Hallelujah Money - featuring the vocals of Benjamin Clementine. An album is expected imminently.

It was only last week the park revealed that part of its revamped upgrades ahead of the summer season included the large live music arena. It said then it hoped to pull in some big names to perform there.

Having struggled financially last year, it has received £15 million to invest ahead of what many expect to a be a sale of the site later this year.

Certainly, to become established as a venue for live music could greatly enhance its offering - while also delivering bumper crowds to the seaside town as part of its ongoing regeneration.

Rebecca Ellis, director of events at Dreamland Margate, said: "We're really excited to be welcoming Demon Dayz and Gorillaz to the newly revamped park. As the first event we house on our newly created event site, this is set to be the gig of the summer.

"Visitors to Dreamland can expect the fun to start early on, with special tunes being played at the Roller Disco and some special celebratory food offerings from our food trucks in preparation for the night's entetainment."

The venue is no stranger to the big names - back in the 1960s it showcased shows by the likes of The Rolling Stones and The Who at its Hall By The Sea venue.

Tickets for Demon Dayz start at £60 and include access to the amusement park, and went on sale from Friday, March 10. Be quick though, the tickets were expected to sell-out swiftly.

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MATURE lady 70s, various interests but a bit lonely, hoping to meet a gent to cheer me up, come on, we can have some fun together. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426349**

KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent 40+ Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3002 Box 419673**

GENTS, please call me if you are looking to meet a kind sincere lady for nights at the theatre, socialising etc. You can call or text me. I promise to reply, I'm very genuine. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426345**

JANE, young 41, very broadminded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. **Tel: No: 0906 515 3010 Box: 409715**

JACKIE is 54yrs and an attractive easygoing brunette, she's hoping to meet a similar minded chap for some fun, dates, chats, text or call me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426343**

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. **Tel: 0906 515 3018 Box: 413399**

ATTRACTIVE blonde lady, 54yrs, loyal, romantic and solvent hoping to meet a gent with GSOH for romance, sensual times and more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426341**

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broadminded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3022 Box 421375**

KAREN, 52yrs, attractive with GSOH, very active and outgoing. If you are 40+ give me a call, lets have a chat, maybe meet up. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426339**

TAMIKA, mature black beauty, hourglass figure and open minded. Pls call if you are discreet, broad minded and nice. I can travel and accommodate. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3006 Box 422365**

CAROLINE, attractive mature lady, various interests, hoping to meet a smart gent for socialising, perhaps leading to something more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426347**

CARLY, 34yrs, attractive and discreet military wife seeks no strings fun with respectable gent. **Tel: 0906 515 3038 Box 424419**

LADY, 70, 5ft6, divorced, blonde hair, brown eyes, friendly, lives in the Kent area, likes walking, holidays, WLTM somebody for friendship in the local area. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426193**

ATTRACTIVE well educated lady, mid 30's, solvent, professional, seeks discreet broad minded gent. ACA. **Tel: 0906 515 3042 Box 425891**

EILEEN mid 60s seeks gent 50s-60s for friendship, possibly much more. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425341**

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AMANDA, slim blonde, 50s seeks discreet gent for special times, mutually beneficial to us both. Call now. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425327**

SAMANTHA, 35yrs, attractive brunette with own business, seeks adventurous gent for casual relationship. **Tel: 0906 515 3034 Box 425979**

KATIE, 39yrs, loves dressing up, role play, fun etc. Hoping to meet like minded chap any age but must be understanding. **Text Only Box: 4085012**

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ANETTA, black cuddly lady seeks man who knows what a woman needs. I'm very friendly and have time for you. Please call or text me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425933**

TAMLA, naughty but nice, curvy kitten! I am 46yrs and love to have some fun. Dates/Chats, something different. Pls call me. **Text Only Box: 4185035**

JANE, attractive and young looking 60 something lady, active, outgoing with interesting personality, hoping to meet a kind gent for occasional meetings. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425931**

GILLY, slim petite lady, affectionate and loving, solvent with own home, hoping to meet gent, must be kind, looks unimportant. ACA/text answered. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425929**

MERRY widow seeks lovely lonely gent for companionship. Please call, we can have a chat and see how we get on. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425927**

LIVELY 53-year-old female, young in mind, wants discreet fun, loves gardening, dancing music etc and more. **Text only. Mailbox: 5763284**

JACKIE, 56yrs, attractive lady who is lots of fun seeks like-minded gent for nights in, days out and much much more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424491**

SUE, 60s lady, calling all gents who seek a mature solvent stylish lady, I can wine and dine you, you will have a nice time, call or text me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424781**

JEAN, mature lady, genuine with many hobbies, slim, blonde and attractive. WLTM interesting gent with GSOH, must be cheerful, looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424675**

SUE, genuine lady, own home, loves to spoil a man, give me a call or text. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424673**

WANTED gent 50-76 for cosy nights in, good times, call or text me, you won't be sorry. I'm attractive and have lots to offer. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425339**

LINDA, 48yrs attractive brunette seeks gent for laughter, wining dining. Age unimportant. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425337**

LOVING lady, romantic and tactile seeks like-minded gent for special times, lets make each other feel special. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425325**

GENUINE lady, 67, slim, GSOH, caring, honest, active, likes most things in life, days out, countryside, animals, long walks, visiting interesting places, cooking and holidays, WLTM a caring, honest male with GSOH, 67-73, with similar interests. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423289**

Men Seeking

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received. mydate24

JERRY, 66, brown hair, brown eyes, recently widowed, love to walk my dog, WLTM compatible lady for companionship and to see where things go. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426387**

LOCAL man, seeks lady for friendship possibly more, for romantic dates and good times together, hope to hear from you. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426195**

HANDSOME male, mid 40s, dark hair, hazel eyes, wishes to meet appropriate female for fun, friendship and perhaps more, please get in touch if interested. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422587**

MALE, 55, looking for no strings attached friendship, with a lady 60-70, any status. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426133**

MALE, 6ft, brown hair and blue eyes, warm and understanding, likes dining out and cosy nights in, lots of fun, friendship and holidays. Looking for a lady over 48. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426057**

CARING sociable, GSOH, slim, attractive, married gent, 67, feels discarded and lonely, seeks likewise lady 60+ for trips out, dining etc. **Text only. Mailbox: 5082918**

SIX foot guy, mature, looking for someone special to spend some quality time with. Please leave me a message I would love to hear from you! **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 420163**

MALE, 70s, would like to meet slim lady 60 plus. **Text only. Mailbox: 4505135**

ATTRACTIVE Caribbean lady 59yrs, very jolly and fun seeking gent any age who must love good times. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425323**

SANDRA, smart, sophisticated lady, young looking 60s, genuine and kind, seeks gent with GSOH, looks unimportant. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424671**

HELEN, mid 50s naughty lady seeks some fun times with gent any age. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424493**

CAROL, mid 50s lady, young at heart, attractive and sexy (so I'm told)! Give me a call if you are a gent with GSOH. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424783**

MARY, professional mature lady, loves life, very sociable and fun, seeks gent for good conversation and happy times. All calls and texts answered. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424775**

50YRS, old attractive lady. Sheila, caring honest, seeks discreet gent. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422469**

CALLING all ladies 40+ who would like to be wined, dined and romanced by attractive gent, 54 years please call or text me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425943**

JOHN, mid sixties widower, cultured and interesting, solvent with own home. WLTM lady 55+ for genuine companionship. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425939**

GENUINE single gent, 55yrs, seeks friendship hopefully leading to true love with lady 35-55, looks unimportant. Please call or text me. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425937**

SOLVENT gentleman, young 70s, loves life seeking a lady of any age to spoil and pamper, take on holidays, wine and dine. Genuine advertiser. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425935**

PROFESSIONAL gentleman, 64, widowed, own house, loves holidays abroad, reading, eating out, eating in and shows, WLTM a lady of similar age to share interests and happy times together hopefully leading to lasting relationship. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425787**

HELLO, mature gentleman looking for a lady who is caring, likes holidays, karaoke, meals out, country walks and cinema. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425401**

GUY, 50, 6ft tall, calm and kind, good company, seeking lovely lady for good times and fun and loving. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425369**

BARRY, 50, 6ft 4ins, well built, divorced gent, looking to date calm and kind lovely lady. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 421195**

CHRIS, 49yrs honest gent seeks lady 45-55 for socialising, friendship, maybe leading to romance. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425345**

PETER, sincere solvent gent 70s seeks lady to wine dine, foreign travel, all expenses paid. I would love a traveling companion. Genuine advertiser. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425343**

MALCOLM, 60 something gent, own hair and teeth, GSOH, genuine and Kind WLTM sincere lady to wine and dine. Please call. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425335**

PROFESSIONAL gent, 44yrs, tall, attractive and genuine. Seeks genuine feminine lady for genuine romance. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425333**

PIERS, 56yrs, romantic gent WLTM lady to wine, dine, spoil. I'm kind, caring, generous pls call me. Single mums welcome. ACA. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425331**

GENUINE gentleman, family minded, kind, generous seeks lady 55-75 for wining, dining and wine and laughter. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425329**

NICE looking 55 year old male WLTM sincere lady, any age, for friendship, outings, holidays abroad etc. Love the sun. **Text only. Mailbox: 4922399**

DENTAL practitioner, 44, 6ft, slim, athletic build, thick dark hair, blue eyes, loves sports, seeks slim feminine sporty lady. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425087**

EDWARD, 77, looking for a companion South East area of Kent, for holidays, days out, social events, and lots more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 423039**

TALL, lively old boy, into red wine, garlic and Radio 3, seeks tactile lady for company and jolly jaunts. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 425021**

MALE, 58, wishes to meet attractive female, into music, live bands, cinema and some sports, for nights out socialising and maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424979**

HI I'm Darren, down to earth guy, lives in Kent, likes Marbaia, looking for someone special to meet and have a laugh with. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424951**

GARETH handsome 40's pilot, strong tall build, seeks daytime discreet passion with lady 30-65. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 414421**

MALE 50 seeks mature, home loving lady, 60 plus who enjoys cosy nights in. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424683**

NICK, mature male, builder, tattoos, plenty of money, looking for discreet meets, no stings in the Kent area. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424787**

RETIRED, intelligent, Broadstairs widower, GSOH, medium height and build, seeks slim lady for friendship and companionship initially. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424697**

59YR old male, likes country walks, pub lunches, seeks lady for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424685**

MARTIN trustworthy, warm hearted, loving, reliable male, 45, 6ft, medium build, young at heart, GSOH, seeks female, 50-60 for friendship, maybe more. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424681**

MARK 48, slim, fit, GSOH, looking for loyal partner for LTR. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424679**

CARING 55yr old male, widower, 6ft 3ins, WLTM lady, 40-55 for fun and laughter, maybe happy ever after. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424677**

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COLIN, 56, 6ft, medium build, clean and tidy with a tidy beard, I'm after some TLC with no strings adult fun. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 422359**

ANDY, tall attractive male, looking for a naughty female, for fun with no strings attached. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424295**

MALE, 52, quiet nature, likes coastal walks, cinema, reading, WLTM lady for friendship and maybe romance. East Kent area. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424211**

SLIM, 5ft 6 white male WLTM 18 to 42 year old lady for friendship. **Text only Mailbox: 5441709**

RICHARD, 64, n/s, from Kent, medium build, clean shaven, likes classic cars, days out, meals out, boot fares, most things, would like to meet a lady for company and to share each others interests. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 424207**

Gay Seeking

Join our Gay online service **FREE** visit: ***localgaydate.co.uk***

ROB, bi-curious male, 55, seeks likeminded male, crossdresser/TV. Must be discreet. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 426287**

TOBY, 41yrs, recently divorced, now seeking different relationship, bi curious but not gay, like minded to me, any age. **Text Only Box: 4125006**

MALE, 40s, seeking gym buddy to attend DW gym in the early evenings, similar age. Margate. **Text only. Mailbox: 5779191**

Friends

FEMALE seeking genuine straight female for daytrips, out to meet socially for lunch/coffee. **Text only to Mailbox No:4748240**

SEEKING ladies for good company, socialising and a bit of fun, BBW local to Kent, get in touch and lets start having fun. **Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 413623**

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

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Kent County Show gets under starter's orders with pony race

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

THE Shetland Pony Grand National is set to be one of the main attraction at this year's Kent County Show after a first look at the entertainment line-up was revealed this week.

The annual event, which welcomed some 80,000 visitors to the Detling Showground near Maidstone last year, will this summer take place from July 7 to 9.

The main Astor Ring will feature the Shetland Pony event on all three show days.

The jockeys will be children aged between eight and 13 who, will not only entertain the crowds, but their participation is part of a qualifier for the ultimate Shetland Pony Grand National at the Olympia Horse Show later in the year.

Spectators will be able to cheer on their favourite horse and jockey during the two and half laps of the ring, incorporating 12 miniature Aintree fences, including a version of Becher's Brook - the notorious fence at the real Grand National.

Lucy Hegarty, show manager, said, "Each year we try to organise a variety of displays and entertainment based on our visitors' expectations.

"Our job is to balance the more traditional displays alongside some new, unique and contemporary entertainment.

"We continue to gain helpful feedback from our audience via social media and are open to suggestions.

"This year we have tried to vary the entertainment highlights and give visitors something a little bit different."

Music will play an important part in the show this year, with the Faversham Mission Brass Band, Kent Police Band and Isle of Sheppey, St John Ambulance Band all performing across the three days.

The Members' Area will also host The City String Trio on Friday and on all three days the exclusive area will be able to hear Rachael Hayward a steel pan player with an eclectic mix of calypso, pop, reggae and jazz.

The show will run over 150 different activities, workshops, displays and competitions during the three days.

Adult tickets are £20.70 in advance and £23 on the gate, and a child ticket is £6.30 in advance and £7 on the gate.

MINIATURE: The horses won't be the only entertainment as there will be a host of music on offer too

Baby animals this Easter

FAVERSHAM'S Brogdale Collections are set for a fun family Easter Weekend (April 15-16) with hatching baby chicks, lambs, and an Easter egg trail.

Tickets available on the gate.

Have you got X Factor?

ITV's hit singing show, the X Factor, is returning to Margate's Dreamland on March 13, and Maidstone's Pizza Express Live on March 12 in the search for Kent's best singing talent.

Open auditions will be held from 11am to 5.30pm.

Book launch for charity

CASUALTY actor Patrick Robinson, will be attending the book launch for Timber's Story, a tale about a guide dog, at The King Charles Hotel in Gillingham on March 15 to raise money for charity.

In town One Night Only

THOUGH you can't see the Bee Gees anymore, you can still hear their music with the Bee Gees Story concert with tribute band The Irish Bee Gees, coming to Maidstone's Hazlitt Theatre on March 17.

For more information, and tickets visit parkwoodtheatres.co.uk

At Last: Singer takes on role of the legendary diva Etta James

By Emily King
emily.king@archant.co.uk

LEGENDARY: Vika Bull takes on the role of Etta James and pays tribute to her career and life

ETTA JAMES was an American singer known for soulful songs such as At Last, and Something's Got A Hold On Me.

Now a tribute to her career and life is touring stages and coming to Tunbridge Wells.

The star started her career in 1954, but faced a number of personal problems such as heroin addiction and physical abuse, which put her career on hold for years. She made a comeback in the 1980s with her album Seven Year Itch, proving her status as a legend.

Now actress and singer Vika Bull portrays Etta James in the show, and says its a role she takes "very seriously."

Speaking to KoS Ms Bull said: "At Last: The Etta James Story is a narrative concert, I tell Etta's story and in between, sing her songs. There are 23 in the show - all great and her story is fascinating.

"It's a role I take very seriously. I have a lot of respect for her. When I started in this business at 17 she was the one I listened to everyday. I liked the way she sand with power and honesty."

Ms Bull's admiration for Etta James started young, but she can still remember the first of her songs she ever heard.

"It was Roll With Me Henry and I was instantly hooked.

"I loved the duet, I loved the voices, I loved the song. Her music has influenced my career greatly because of the way that she sang, and I liked the fact that she could sing a lot of styles."

Unsurprisingly, preparing to portray such a celebrated performer has required plenty of preparation, as Ms Bull explains: "I read her book Rage To Survive and I already knew most of her music, so there was no problem there.

"The main thing was preparing my voice because the show is a very hard sing and I had to get vocally fit.

"All I Could Do Was Cry, is very sad and gets me every time. But The Fool That I Am is very challenging to sing. I do have a favourite song to perform though, which is Tough Lover."

Etta James died in 2012 aged 73.

The show is coming to Tunbridge Wells' Assembly Hall on April 4.

For tickets visit the website at assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk

Dartford Fest has X Factor

X FACTOR winner Matt Terry has been announced as the first headline act for this year's Dartford Festival on July 15-16.

The singer rose to number three with his debut single written by Ed Sheeran.

Crafts for Mother's Day

ON Mother's Day weekend at Penshurst Place, near Tonbridge, children can create their own gift and hand-made card in the Old Coach House, while parents explore the gardens.

For admission prices and more information visit penshurstplace.com

LeeFest gets Bugg-ed

ANNOUNCING its 'biggest lineup to date', LeeFest has confirmed Jake Bugg and Annie Mac as headliners. The event is staged near Tunbridge Wells from August 10 to 12.

For tickets visit leefest.org

Watson's stand up tour

COMEDIAN Mark Watson is bringing his stage show, MW, to Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre on November 24.

Mr Watson is a regular on BBC 2's Never Mind The Buzzcocks, and Mock The Week, and BBC 1's Have I Got News For You.

For tickets visit marlowetheatre.co.uk

Berry bakes back in life after TV phenomenon

She may have ditched Bake Off, but Mary Berry will be presenting a new series about country homes

VIEWERS were left bereft when Mary Berry announced she wouldn't be following The Great British Bake Off and Paul Hollywood's move to Channel 4.

But fear not, fans - five months on and the Somerset-born cook, whose final GBBO hurrah came in the form of a National Television Award for Best TV Judge earlier this year, is back with a new BBC Two TV series and accompanying cookbook, Mary Berry Everyday, celebrating items which have formed the cornerstone of her cooking over six decades.

"I was thinking about, as the title suggests, the everyday," explains Berry 81, whose culinary career started with training, aged 21, at Le Cordon Bleu school, France. "Everyday can be just with the family, it can mean having friends around, it can be a special occasion."

While the six-part series will follow Berry as she travels to Scotland to enjoy the best of their everyday larder; tries her hand at bee keeping; and teaches her own grand-daughter to milk a goat and make cheese, the tie-in tome will document her own kitchen creations (120, to be exact), alongside top tricks and tips.

With everything from hearty and wholesome, to indulgent and easy crowd-pleasers on the menu, it's a catalogue that's sure to please.

"All the recipes are tried out at home," notes the star, who reveals she welcomes constructive criticism from her tight-knit family (Berry often cooks for her husband, Paul Hunnings, and their children and grandchildren).

PASSIONATE: Mary Berry is also releasing a new cookbook

"The children might say, 'Oh yuck', or someone may say, 'That takes too long to do', and those don't go in the book," she confides. "But I make sure there aren't too many of those!

"It's important not to have too many ingredients or pieces of equipment," she adds. "I want to inspire people to cook, and I do think a book is a nice thing to have. I'm very lucky that people trust me and that they have a go."

With more than 70 titles under her belt, it's safe to say people do trust Berry - and fans will be pleased to hear she isn't hanging up her apron strings any time soon.

"I'm not stepping back; I am doing different things," Berry insists, resolute in her choice to keep busy.

"Maybe Mel, Sue and I will get down to something..." she adds cryptically (the Bake Off co-presenters also decided to quit the popular series when the shock channel switch was announced), though it's unlikely to happen overnight.

"I've got a new series on country houses coming up, I'll be doing a bit at Chelsea [Flower Show] I expect, and I'll be doing a new series for 2018," lists Berry.

"Don't worry, I won't be idle."

Mary Berry's Secrets From Britain's Great Houses will be debuting this summer on the BBC.

Variety show funds bid

VOLUNTEERS behind the Calverley Adventure Grounds project are pulling out all the stops to reach their £225,000 target by March 16 by throwing a variety show.

The scheme aims to redevelop the bowling green at Calverley Grounds into an area for children to enjoy. But the project needs a further £40,000 by the date set.

Tickets can be purchased the via the website assemblyhalltheatre.co.uk

Bowie double for RSD

TWO limited-edition David Bowie albums are to be released to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Record Store Day on April 22.

Live album Cracked Actor and a facsimile of a Hunky Dory promotional record will be made available, as well as rare photographs and original prints of the Bromley legend.

Last month the singer was presented with two Brit Awards, a year after his death.

Mayor's dancing shoes

ITALIAN DANCER Giovanni Pernice danced with two lucky Gravesham ladies this week.

The Strictly Come Dancing star visited ahead of his show, Il Ballo E Vita's performance at the Woodville Theatre on July 5.

Whilst visiting he danced with competition winner Julie Sherwood, and the mayor of Gravesham, Greta Goatley.

For tickets visit woodville.seatlive.com

Crucible's on the hunt

ARTHUR MILLER'S The Crucible stands as both a historical record and a political parable for our times, and it's making its way to Dartford's Orchard Theatre from March 14-18.

The production stars Charlie Condou (Coronation Street), as the witch-hunter, Reverend Hale, and Lucy Kierl (Call The Midwife) as Abigail Williams.

For tickets visit orchardtheatre.co.uk

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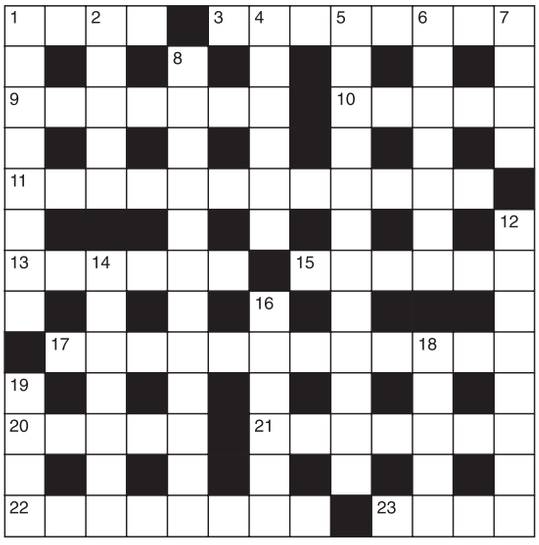
PUZZLES

DOUBLE CROSSWORD



Quick

Across

1. Ponder (4)
3. Ridicule (8)
9. Inveterate (7)
10. Avoid (5)
11. Genuineness (12)
13. Vileness (6)
15. Fold (6)
17. Despicable (12)
20. Join (5)
21. Release (7)
22. Battle (8)
23. Leave out (4)

Down

1. Artisan (8)
2. Prop (5)
4. Stimulate (6)
5. Wrongly (12)
6. Sluggishness (7)
7. Memorandum (4)
8. Spasmodic (12)
12. Humble (8)
14. Fluent (7)
16. Criticise (6)
18. Flower (5)
19. Grass (4)

Cryptic

Across

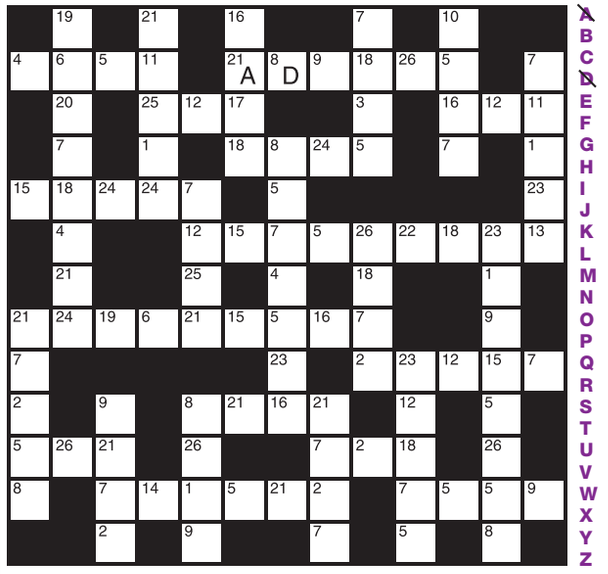
1. Was purchased, of course, from the parasol department (4)
3. The offer has support, also disagreement (8)
9. Father uses syrup mixture for writing on! (7)
10. A ring in a ring? (5)
11. Expenses of athletes? (7,5)
13. He's a cruel person but unhappy having to sit out (6)
15. Ran set out at the back (6)
17. Does it make the end of term go with a bang? (6,6)
20. Not concealed in an introverted way (5)
21. Notices for this department (7)
22. Tears to pieces - toy dress fault (8)
23. Release for nothing (4)

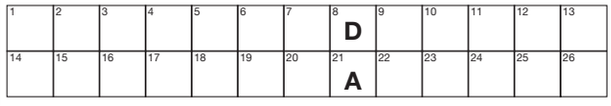
Down

1. Put down to drink with reporters (8)
2. Some are well up in such a flower (5)
4. Calmly accept one will have to hand in one's notice? (6)
5. Grammatical term for extract from oration (4,2,6)
6. Weaver's instrument may go into space! (7)
7. Boy finds youthful head is female (4)
8. Railway enthusiast coaches worker in clay (12)
12. An example from the ancients (8)
14. He wrote the --- of a lot of novels! (7)
16. Showy - electrifyingly so? (6)
18. Ore is used in basket-making (5)
19. Ruin set-up in depression (4)

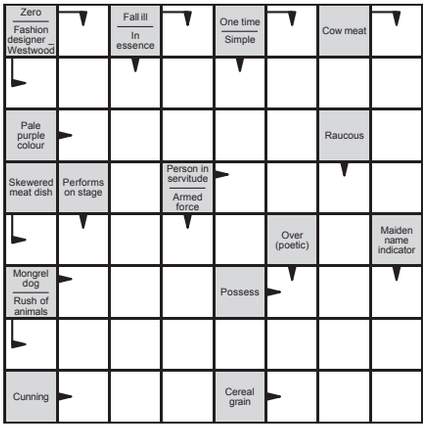
CODEWORD

This puzzle has no clues. Instead, every number printed in the grid represents a letter, with the same number always representing the same letter.
For example, if 8 turns out to be a V, you can write in V wherever a square contains 8. Using your knowledge of words, complete the puzzle.





Arrowword

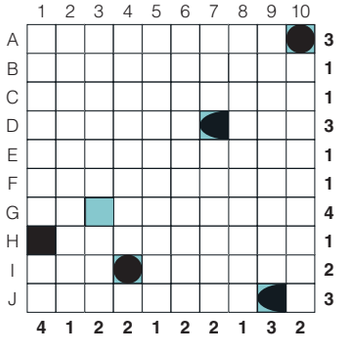


Enter your answers in the direction indicated by the arrows.

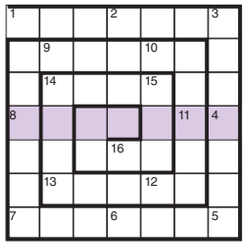
Battleships

Find where ships shown below are hidden in the grid. The numbers to the right of and below the grid indicate how many of the squares in that row are filled in with ships or parts of ships. The ships do not touch each other, even diagonally. Some of the squares have been filled to start you off.

THE FLEET
1 x Battleship
2 x Cruiser
3 x Destroyer
4 x Submarine



Word Spiral



Starting from 1, fill in the grid clockwise with four-letter words. The last letter of each word becomes the first letter of the next to reveal the key word in the shaded boxes.

1. Bludgeon
2. German wine
3. Flightless bird
4. Lazy
5. Resound
6. Expel
7. Marquee, say
8. Story
9. Biblical garden
10. Invalid
11. Speech defect
12. Bard
13. Mountain lake
14. Undiluted
15. Throw
16. Large boat

Keyword clue: A capital city

SUDOKU

Hard

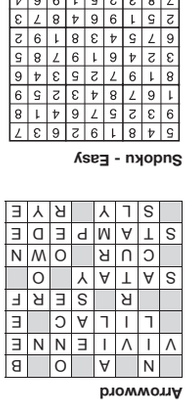
	5			3				
9			8	1			2	
6	7					3		
			4			5		
	8				3		4	
		9			2			
7		3					6	1
	4			6	9			8
				2			9	

Easy

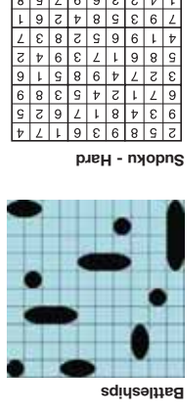
	4	8			2	6		7
9			5			4	1	
	6		8			2		
8				2		3	4	
		4	6		9			5
	7	5		3		1		
		1			4		7	
7	8	3		5	1			4
		6	3				2	

Solutions

Arrowword



Battleships



Double Crossword
Cryptic
Across: 1 Sold; 3 Proposal; 9 Papyrus; 10 Round; 11 Running costs; 13 Sadist; 15 Astern; 17 School report; 20 Overt; 21 Section; 22 Destroys; 23 Free. Down: 1 Suppresses; 2 Lupin; 4 Resign; 5 Part of speech; 6 Shuttle; 7 Lady; 8 Trainspotter; 12 Instance; 14 Dickens; 16 Flashy; 18 Osier; 19 Mood.
Quick
Across: 1 Muse; 3 Derision; 9 Chronic; 10 Avert; 11 Authenticity; 13 Infamy; 15 Crease; 17 Contemptible; 20 Unite; 21 Unloose; 22 Fighting; 23 Omit.
Down: 1 Mechanic; 2 Strut; 4 Excite; 5 Inaccurately; 6 Inertia; 7 Note; 8 Intermittent; 12 Reverent; 14 Flowing; 16 Impugn; 18 Bloom; 19 Turf.
Codeword
1=U, 2=K, 3=Z, 4=C, 5=E, 6=H, 7=S, 8=D, 9=M, 10=J, 11=W, 12=O, 13=G, 14=Q, 15=B, 16=T, 17=X, 18=I, 19=P, 20=Y, 21=A, 22=V, 23=N, 24=L, 25=F, 26=R
Word Spiral
1 Cosh; 2 Hock; 3 Kiwi; 4 Idle; 5 Echo; 6 Oust; 7 Tent; 8 Tale; 9 Eden; 10 Null; 11 Lisp; 12 Poet; 13 Tarn; 14 Neat; 15 Toss; 16 Ship.
Keyword: Tripoli

Sudoku - Easy

5	4	8	1	9	2	6	3	7
9	3	2	5	7	6	4	1	8
1	6	7	8	4	3	2	5	9
8	1	9	7	2	5	3	4	6
3	2	4	6	1	9	7	8	5
6	7	5	4	3	8	1	9	2
2	5	1	9	6	4	8	7	3
7	8	3	2	5	1	9	6	4
4	9	6	3	8	7	5	2	1

Sudoku - Hard

2	5	8	9	3	6	1	7	4
9	3	4	8	1	7	6	2	5
6	7	1	2	4	5	3	8	9
3	2	7	4	9	8	5	1	6
5	8	6	1	7	3	9	4	2
4	1	9	6	5	2	8	3	7
7	9	3	5	8	4	2	6	1
1	4	2	3	6	9	7	5	8
8	6	5	7	2	1	4	9	3

Corsica is something a bit different

Corsica was never somewhere I'd considered visiting. But if you like places away from the norm it may be your next hidden gem.In the heart of the Med, its first appeal is the balmy climate, with temperatures from 25C in early and late season to a peak of 35C during July and August.

Some 1,000km of stunning coastline hides many tiny coves and inlets; a great tip for spotting them is to look for cars parked on the side of the road in the middle of nowhere. Follow the barely trodden path and before long you will reach the treasure.

Nightlife is defined by bustling cafes and restaurants. Driving is also very easy. There are only narrow, two-lane highways so don't expect to get anywhere fast. Beware of the cattle and pigs around the sharp bends!

For those not wanting to drive, there is still the chic and sophisticated town of Calvi with its beautiful bay and historic citadel - you could easily spend your whole holiday here. Walk up the hill to the church of Madonna Serra – with its splendid view. Spend a day wandering the shops of the Old Citadel. Take boat trips to the Scandola Nature Reserve. Try horse riding, watersports, a jeep safari and much more.

For city slickers the capital, Ajaccio, is a historic and stylish coastal city, famed as the birthplace of Napoleon and home to a large marina and trendy vibe. St Florent is another bustling waterfront destination with a chic marina and charming old town housing vibrant bars. So if you are thinking of 'something just a little different' – but maybe not too much - Corsica may be worth a try.

Corsica. Picture: Corsican Places

HOW TO GET THERE

When to go

Between April to October. It is at its busiest in July and August.

How to get there

Charter flights are available between London Stansted and Calvi, departing on a Sunday. There is also a no-frills options from London Gatwick into both Ajaccio and Bastia. British Airways also flies into Figari.

The flight time is approximately two and a half hours.

Where to stay

Calvi

The A Merula apartments are a great choice for those without a car.

It is great value for money with seven days on a self-catering basis, starting from just £502 per person in May and including flights from Stansted, accommodation and transfers.

If you would prefer a hotel instead, the popular Hotel St Christophe is a good choice. Seven nights B&B will cost from £699 per person.

St Florent

If Michelin star cuisine is your thing, then look no further than the Hotel la Roya in St Florent. Prices here start from around £1,299 per person for a seven night stay.

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your say...

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Please include your name and address, although these will be withheld in exceptional circumstances, and a daytime phone number for verification (this will not be published). We reserve the right to edit all letters.

Support housing for airport site

THANET District Council is now inviting comment on its draft local plan that will help determine local planning applications.

The mixed use of the old Manston Airport site as detailed in the draft local plan will serve Thanet very well. It will provide the housing the government insists on, while not taking away any of our very valued greenfield sites.

It will provide much-needed jobs, facilities such as doctors and schools, and retain a good amount of open space.

The alternative - a noisy, polluting largely cargo airport – would seriously detract from Thanet as a tourist destination, particularly for Ramsgate (and Herne Bay).

After many years of decline, Thanet is once more becoming increasingly popular as a leisure destination. Ramsgate's cafe culture is thriving.

There is real regeneration taking place. All that would be destroyed by the reopening of the old airport, particularly as a cargo hub.

And there is a very good chance that the project as outlined by the foreign-owned RiverOak would fail, as all other attempts at creating a viable airport at Mansion have failed.

If you share this vision for mixed use of the former airfield, please tell TDC that you support the draft local plan.

The deadline for comment is March 17.

Simon Crow,
Ramsgate

We must allow it to fly once more

WHAT a boost it would be to Kent if we had an airport in this south east corner of the UK.

When you think how the London City Airport started and is now a really successful busines operation, vision is what's needed.

Sadly with Kent County Council and Thanet District Council, this is lacking. Both prefer the houses option.

This does not bring work in the long term - the potential for Manston now is enormous. Let's make the most of it.

P Shaw,
Margate

Crossing fiasco is due to money

IT was not surprising to read that the Dartford Crossing until recently, has been classed as a rural road, so therefore exempt from the Air Quality Assessment list. Simple reason being; money!

Until recently all vehicles had to stop at the toll booths, causing endless congestion and hence more pollution than was really necessary, but the government did not want to advertise that fact,

But when the crossing was to become free in 2003 and hence more free-flowing, the Labour government took the decision that toll money and delaying drivers was much more important than any pollution levels.

The Conservatives were happy to carry on with this policy when they came to power, as they waited for the right technology to become available and they could introduce the current camera based free flowing system, while still maintaining the cash-grab.

Hence they can now re-classify the road, which now dovetails into their current national anti driver campaign of 'fake news' pollution scare stories.

Terry Hudson,
Member of the Alliance of British Drivers

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Manston must now focus on a future role

BERNARD Clayson [Letters, last week] joins a growing band of sane, level-headed people who rightly condemn speculation on Manston Airport as mere flights of fancy.

He's right, if any airline thought it could take off they would have come jetting-in, but the opposite is the case - they tried, then flew the coop.

If entrepreneurs thought it worth a punt, as an airport, they'd have flocked in - they haven't.

The best deal is any plan which brings in private interest and private money, and to ignore it is to fly in the face of reason.

Politicians can afford to play to the audience - it's not their money, they are happy to fly any kite to get a gullible public on board.

These false prophets promise what they cannot deliver - probably because they are here today and long since gone by the time the chickens come home to roost.

Their only interest is today's votes; tomorrow's finances are someone else's headache.

As for those of "our cultural heritage" brigade: don't turn it into something it's not, it was useful at one point in our history, but it's time to move on - the Spitfires stopped flying years ago and, as far as the Battle of Britain was concerned, it was too far forward and vulnerable; it was only after the German airforce was destroyed did it become useful as a forward base for ground attack aircraft.

It had greater significance during the First World War and the Cold War.

It's a resource - use it to serve the future, don't coddle it in its past. Enough public money has been frittered away.

John Ward Moorhouse,
Tunbridge Wells

Don't kick out EU workers in Brexit

THE government urgently needs to rein in its attempts to use the millions of EU citizens living across the UK as bargaining chips in Brexit negotiations.

People from the EU make a huge contribution to our local economy and society. Recent figures have shown that EU citizens across Kent, Surrey and Sussex include over 800 doctors and 5,500 nurses. Across the south east, over 8,000 European nationals work in social care.

Our local NHS and care services in Kent would struggle to cope if these people left as they no longer felt welcome. The stark truth is you can't have a hard Brexit and a strong NHS.

The ball is now in the court of MPs to do the right thing. We must secure the future of the millions of people currently in limbo and stand up for a Britain that is open, tolerant and united.

James Flanagan,
Lib Dem PPC for Canterbury and Whitstable

NHS relies on its immigrant staff

REGARDING the letter 'Luvvies and KoS dragging the country into ruin' [KoS, 19.02], I was puzzled and had to laugh.

Mr Petter says "we can't get treatment under the NHS because the service is overrun with immigrants" - surely he meant to say the NHS is often 'run' by immigrants, because without many people from other countries, we would not have an NHS as we know it.

It's good we haven't built a wall around this country yet, otherwise the NHS would not exist.

Robin Townsend,
Barham

Immigrants are denying our docs

DR Selwyn D'Costa's letter last week asks us to support giving permanent residence not just to doctors but to all NHS staff, presumably down to the last cleaner.

Ever since 1948, the NHS has been importing staff instead of providing adequate education and training for UK nationals, particularly aspirant doctors. British nationals are heavily discriminated against. Instead, we pay very high salaries to overseas nationals not only from Europe but also from underdeveloped countries, which desperately need doctors at home.

Hospitals in Kent are particularly inadequate, not least because resources are siphoned off to London teaching hospitals.

Perhaps Dr D'Costa can write to KoS again to show what representations he and his colleagues at the BMA have made to the government to set up a major medical school training home-grown school leavers at one of Kent's universities. He should also explain why these representations have not yet worked, and what more can be done.

The NHS employs a considerable proportion of the entire UK population. It is out of the question to let the NHS import workers without restriction.

Frederic Stansfield,
Ramsgate

KOS 10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AS part of our commitment to providing the best service to you, we have produced our 10 guiding principles

Kent on Sunday will:

1) Be available in every postcode in Kent.
2) Be fair, accurate and balanced.
3) Be written in clear, concise English.
4) Not be overly sensational.
5) Have a sense of humour.
6) Have an easily understood division between news, comment and advertising.
7) Seek to celebrate as well as constructively criticise.
8) Highlight topical issues of concern to people living in the county.
9) Spotlight individual cases which raise broader concerns.
10) Champion causes that it feels are important to the well-being of the county and its people.

We hope you enjoy Kent on Sunday.

images of kent

Whitstable Harbour

by **Ernie Jordan from Margate**

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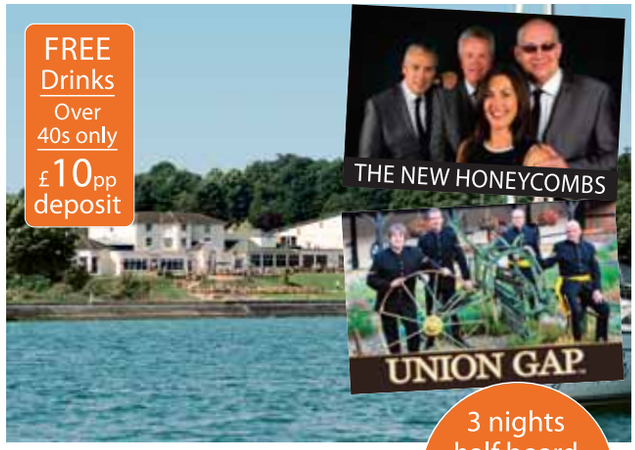
4-star 60s Sounds in Hertfordshire

4-star Aubrey Park Hotel, St Albans

20 August, 2017 • Quote: AP-KOS

A quiet woodland backdrop between Hemel Hempstead and St Albans set in 9 acres of rolling English countryside, sets the scene for a stay that's well and truly relaxing at the 4-star Aubrey Park Hotel. Its heritage stretches back to 1287, but the hotel has been brought bang up to date with fresh contemporary interiors including the light, airy Brasserie serving great seasonal food. We've lined up some great tribute acts to entertain you with the evocative 60s sounds of Tom Jones and Dusty Springfield.

INCLUDED: Two nights en-suite accommodation • 2 breakfasts & 2 dinners • Entertainment each evening



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£10pp deposit

3 nights half board PLUS from £259pp

Sounds of the 60s Christmas Party

Warner Norton Grange, Isle of Wight

24 November, 2017 - Quote CN11-KOS

Great Entertainment, a fab festive atmosphere, Free drinks, good food, comfortable centrally-heated chalets, free car ferry and a super location make Warner's Norton Grange resort, on the Isle of Wight, our most popular Christmas Party venue. We've got a great entertainment line-up with 60s band Union Gap, The New Honeycombs, The New All Stars featuring Keith Slater PLUS our traditional Team Panto and much more.

INCLUDED: Free drinks 6pm to midnight every night - house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & pumped mixers • Full entertainment programme • 3 nights en-suite chalet - upgrades available • 3 breakfasts & 3 dinners • Free car ferry • Free parking

FREE Drinks
Exclusive Charter
Over 40s only
*£25pp deposit

5 days full board PLUS from £749pp

Rhine New Year Party River Cruise

Cologne, Koblenz & Rüdesheim

By Rail from Ebbsfleet or Air from Gatwick

29 December, 2017 - Quote RN12-KOS

Welcome in the New Year with the splendours and stunning scenery along the Rhine on this relaxing river cruise on board the 4-star Mps Switzerland II which hosts you in style with all meals, selected free drinks and entertainment in an informal, fun and friendly atmosphere. This holiday visits the famous towns of Cologne, Koblenz and Rüdesheim, where we welcome in the New Year with a celebration dinner and entertainment.

INCLUDED: Entertainment • Beer, wine by the glass, and soft drinks served at lunch and dinner and from 10am to 1am at the bar • Escorted rail travel from St Pancras and Ebbsfleet OR return flights with luggage from a choice of UK airports - supp't may apply • 4-nights full board cruise on the 4-star MPS Switzerland II • Transfers abroad • Services of our Cruise Director on board

*Conditions apply to low deposit - please call for details

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Isle of Wight Come Dancing 60s Party

Warner Bembridge Coast

5 January, 2018 • Quote: BE1-2-KOS

Fans of ballroom and latin dancing will love our popular Come Dancing Party, running alongside the 60s music themed Carry on New Year Party at Warner Bembridge on the Isle of Wight. Hosted by World Champion dancers Warren & Kristi Boyce, this party break features up to 8 hours dance tuition and social dancing, a Gala Ball, a huge dance floor with reserved tables and seating exclusively for dancers. You can also enjoy live entertainment in the show lounge featuring Union Gap, The Cufflinks & Vicki Lambert as 60s Divas and free drinks every evening.

INCLUDED: • Free drinks from 6pm to midnight every night - house beers & spirits, wine by the glass, pumped soft drinks & pumped mixers• Up to 8 hours dance tuition and social dancing • Gala Ball • Reserved tables and seating • Live nightly entertainment • 3 nights en-suite chalet - upgrades available • 3 breakfasts & 3 dinners • Free car ferry crossing • Free parking

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driving

By Steve Loader
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

BOOST: The elegant Stinger fastback saloon, bottom, The Rio supermin, above, the sporty new Picanto, below, and the popular Sportage, left

Ambitious Kia turns on the style with new breed

THEY say seven is a lucky number - it's been a winner for Kia.

Once it launched the first Ceed family hatchback in 2007, sweetened with a seven-year/100,000-mile warranty, the Korean marque leapt from value brand to genuine mainstream player - the UK's 11th best-selling brand in 2016

This warranty – extended to all new Kia models following the Ceed – hasn't been beaten or even matched by any other brand on the UK market. Most rivals settle for three years and 60,000 miles.

For those who worry about image more than a keen deal though, Kia also pulled another stroke by hiring German design guru Peter Schreyer, the man acclaimed for the original Audi TT.

His breakthrough car for Kia was the audacious third generation Sportage SUV, which became the brand's UK best seller and recruiting sergeant. Its 2016 replacement followed suit and, while echoing its predecessor's style, looks neater and more upmarket.

It is little brother to the seven-seat Sorento – a cut-price rival to the Volvo XC90 – and both Kia SUVs were joined last year by a smaller sibling, the Niro crossover, also Kia's first hybrid. It's a clever one too with an auto gearbox that makes it more pleasurable to drive than other hybrids.

But the big news now is at the extremes of the Kia line-up: it has just launched the fourth-generation Rio supermini – five-door only this time by popular demand – with more style and quality, while the third generation Picanto city arrives soon topped by a racy GT Line option (pictured).

At the other end of the range comes the Stinger, a fastback saloon and sign of Kia's ambition, with a driver-pleasing rear-wheel drive chassis to take on the German premium brands – don't bet against it – and arriving in the UK at the end of this year.

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KENT LIFE

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The official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the cars shown are: urban 39.2 (7.2)–47.1 (6); extra-urban 60.1 (4.7)–62.8 (4.5); combined 50.4 (5.6)–55.4 (5.1). The official CO_2 emissions are 127–114g/km. Figures are obtained for comparative purposes in accordance with EU Legislation and may not reflect real life driving results.

New Clio Dynamique Nav 1.2 16v 75 monthly payment based on £2,133 deposit, 36 monthly payments of £149, optional final payment of £5,418. Captur Dynamique Nav TCe 90 monthly payment based on £2,537 deposit, 36 monthly payments of £159, optional final payment of £6,674. All-New Mégane Hatch Dynamique Nav TCe 130 monthly payment based on £3,256 deposit, 36 monthly payments of £219, optional final payment of £6,360. Kadjar Dynamique Nav TCe 130 monthly payment based on £2,913 deposit, 36 monthly payments of £199, optional final payment of £10,018. Finance provided by Renault Finance, PO Box 149, Watford WD17 1FJ. Subject to status. Indemnities may be required. UK residents only (excluding the Channel Islands). Over 18s. Terms and conditions apply. Offer based on 6,000 miles per annum, excess mileage 8p per mile inc VAT. Finance available on selected new vehicles when ordered and registered by 31st March 2017. Excludes New Clio Expression models. Captur shown with metallic paint, and painted roof at an extra £894. New Clio shown has optional metallic paint, available at £625. Kadjar shown has optional metallic paint, available at £645. All-New Mégane Hatch shown with optional metallic paint, available at £545.

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17 PLATE

Clio just keeps getting better and better

Renault's move upmarket is reflected in the revamped supermini which still manages to turn heads and offers an entertaining ride full of whistles and bells

Renault Clio TCe 120 Dynamique S

Price:	from £17,165
Driving appeal:	★★★★
Image:	★★★★★
Space:	★★★★
Value:	★★★★
Running costs:	★★★★
How green?:	★★★★
Best rival:	Ford Fiesta

CLIO was 25 last year and still looking fresh.

Nevertheless, Renault decided the current fourth generation car needed a facelift, which addressed a few weaknesses found in the French marque's glamour girl, without in turn weakening her appeal

With a wide stance and the slim-waisted effect of the side feature sill now used to such effect on other Renaults, this supermini has a lean and sporty look whether it's the £11,915 Expression entry model or a scorching Renaultsport performance flagship.

And you'd be a Philistine to moan about the lack of a racy three-door option to complement the one-size-fits-all five-door layout.

This argument is helped by hidden rear door handles suggesting coupe rather than hatchback lines; "oh, that old trick" I hear you say, but it's been nicely and properly applied on the Clio.

The interior upgrade is impressive and Renault is justly proud of new 'big car' options, including panoramic roof, rear parking camera, hands-free parking, Bose premium sounds, and upgraded infotainment/phone connectivity.

Personalisation has also been increased to challenge the likes of the BMW Mini, Fiat 500 and DS3.

Engine choice remains a highlight: I like the lively yet well priced three-cylinder TCe 90 petrol we road tested last year, and enjoyed the quite brilliant 1.2 TCe 120 sampled this time.

This unit is smooth yet punchy when required, allowing you to enjoy the car's comfortable yet sporty chassis; gone are the days when Clios leaned, literally, towards traditionally supple French suspensions.

And while I'm not a huge fan of diesels in superminis, due to their additional weight and effect on the car's driving dynamics, there is also much to recommend the Clio's 1.5 dCi 90 and 1.5 dCi 110 diesel options; this engine has been a star in many Renault models thanks to its refinement, liveliness and economy and the 90hp offers a staggering 88.3 mpg (official combined).

What was already clear before the facelift last October, it how this supermini feels as comfortable and competent as cars from a bigger class.

And while the latest Clio is bigger than its predecessors, interior and boot space has increased too, allowing four adults to ride in comfort, while the 300-litre boot plus1,146-litre 'seats down' total load space is amongst best in class.

As one of Renault's top sellers it has obviously contributed to the marque's impressive 12.5 per cent rise in market share last year, aided by one of the better warranties – four years/100,000 miles. The latest Clio shows how Renault is subtly moving upmarket and into a more image-led environment.

*Verso Active 1.6 V-matic Manual at NIL Advance Payment. Model shown is a Verso Icon 7-Seat 1.6 V-matic Manual at £95 Advance Payment. AYGO x-press 5 door 1.0 VVT-i at NIL Advance Payment, Yaris Icon 5 door 1.4 D-4D Manual at NIL Advance Payment, Yaris Hybrid Icon 5 door 1.5 VVT-i Auto at NIL Advance Payment, and Auris Hybrid Icon 5 door 1.8 VVT-i Auto at £495 Advance Payment. Subject to availability. Please note that a total of 60,000 miles over three years are allowed on the Motability Contract Hire Scheme. Offer valid between 1st January and 31st March 2017. Available as part of the Motability Contract Hire Scheme.

Verso Icon 7-Seat 1.6 V-matic Manual. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 32.8 (8.6), Extra Urban 49.6 (5.7), Combined 41.5 (6.8). CO_2 Emissions 157g/km. AYGO x-press 5 door 1.0 VVT-i x-shift. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 56.5 (5.0), Extra Urban 78.5 (3.6), Combined 68.9 (4.1). CO_2 Emissions 95g/km. Yaris Icon 5 door 1.4 D-4D Manual. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 67.3 (4.2), Extra Urban 91.1 (3.1), Combined 80.7 (3.5). CO_2 Emissions 91/km. Yaris Hybrid Icon 5 door 1.5 VVT-i Auto. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 91.1 (3.1), Extra Urban 85.6 (3.3), Combined 85.6 (3.3). CO_2 Emissions 75g/km. Auris Hybrid Icon 5 door 1.8 VVT-i Auto. Official Fuel Consumption Figures in mpg (l/100km): Urban 80.7 (3.5) Extra Urban 80.7 (3.5) Combined 78.5 (3.6). CO_2 Emissions 82g/km. All mpg and CO_2 figures quoted are sourced from official EU regulated laboratory test results. These are provided to allow comparisons between vehicles and may not reflect your actual driving experience.

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LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

Section 17 Licensing Act 2003
Licensing Act 2003: Application for a new Premises Licence

Notice is hereby given that Amano Ltd has applied to the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council on 2nd March 2017 for a new premises licence for Amano, 47, Swan Street, West Malling, ME19 6JU

The proposed application is to

1. ***Permit the sale by retail of alcohol and***
2. ***Permit the provision of late night refreshment***

Any person who wishes to make a representation in relation to this application must give notice in writing of his/her representation by ***30th March 2017 (28 days the day after the application is received by the licensing department)*** stating the grounds for making said representation to: Licensing Services, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4LZ, Licensing.service@tmbc.gov.uk

Any person wishing to view details of an application can contact the licensing team on 01732 876368

The Licensing Authority must receive representations by the date given above. Representations must relate to one or more of the four licensing objectives: THE PREVENTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER, PUBLIC SAFETY, THE PREVENTION OF PUBLIC NUISANCE, and OR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM HARM.

It is an offence under s 158 Licensing Act 2003 to knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application and the maximum fine, on summary conviction for the offence to a fine at Level 5 on the standard scale.

Stephen Thomas LAW, Solicitors for the Applicant,
8, Grassmere, Leybourne, West Malling Kent
ME19 5QP

PUBLIC NOTICE - Application for Variation of Premises Licence

We Lashings World X1 Ltd hereby give notice that we have made an application to the Maidstone Borough Council c/o The Licensing Partnership Sevenoaks, The Council Offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1HG on 3rd March 2017 for variation of the premises licence in respect of the premises situated at 81, Upper Stone Street, Maidstone Kent ME15 6HE and known by the sign of Lashings:

1. To re-arrange the internal layout of the premises in accordance with the plans deposited with this application
2. To extend the hours for the provision of regulated entertainment on Christmas Day from 10.00 - 02.00 to 10.00 – 06.00
3. To extend the hours for the sale of alcohol on Christmas Day from 10.00 - 02.00 to 10.00 – 06.00
4. To extend the hours for the provision of late night refreshment on Christmas Day from 23.00 - 02.00 to 23.00 – 05.00

The application can be viewed at the offices of the Licensing Authority, Maidstone Borough Council, Maidstone House King Street, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6JQ between 9.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m – Monday to Friday (except public holidays) or www.sevenoaks.gov.uk

Any person wishing to make representation concerning this application should do so in writing to the above local authority and within 28 consecutive days of the submission of the application, that is no later than 31st March 2017.

Any person may make representations on licensing objectives grounds only i.e **the prevention of crime and disorder, the prevention of public nuisance, public safety and the protection of children from harm**. Copies of all representations will be sent to the applicant. It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application and the maximum fine for which a person is liable on summary conviction for the offence to a fine at Level 5 on the standard scale.

Stephen Thomas LAW, 8, Grassmere, Leybourne, Kent ME19 5QP

Authorised Agents for and on behalf of the applicant

PREMISES/ GOODS LICENCES

Licensing Act 2003
Application for a New Premises Licence

Name of Applicant: Haziraj

Premises: Mario's Café of 10 East Street Sittingbourne ME10 5RT

Proposed Licensable activities:

Sale of Alcohol for both on and off sales in conjunction with a meal

Monday to Saturday 10:00am until 17:00

Sunday 10:00am until 16:30

End of Consultation period: 3rd April 2017

Any objections to this application must be made in writing to The Licensing Department

Swale Borough Council
Swale HouseEast Street, Sittingbourne
Kent, ME10 3HT

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application. Any person who makes a false statement is liable, on summary conviction, to a maximum fine of £5,000

Licensing Act 2003
Application for a New Premises Licence

Name of Applicant: Priyashalini Muralitharan

Premises: Kemsley Village Stores The Square Kemsley Sittingbourne Kent, ME10 2SL

Current Licensable activities: Sale of Alcohol & Opening Hours Monday – Saturday 08:00 – 22:30 Sunday 08:00 – 22.30

Proposed Variations : Extension of hours: Sale of alcohol Mon – Sun 06:00 – 00:00

End of Consultation period: 31st March 2017

Any objections to this application must be made in writing to The Licensing Department

Swale Borough Council
Swale House
East Street
Sittingbourne
Kent, ME10 3HT

It is an offence knowingly or recklessly to make a false statement in connection with an application. Any person who makes a false statement is liable, on summary conviction, to a maximum fine of £5,000

LICENSING ACT 2003

Notice is hereby given that **Balasubramaniam Arunthevan** has applied to Gravesham Borough Council for a New Premises Licence for:

1:) Off Sale of alcohol
Monday – Sunday 06:00am – 23:00
Bank Holidays / Christmas Day / New Year's Eve / New Year Day
06:00am – 23:00

for the premises Balas

situated at 192 Rochester Road Gravesend Kent DA12 4TY

A register of licensing applications can be inspected at: www.gravesham.gov.uk/licensing or at Licensing Section, Regulatory Services, Civic Centre, Windmill Street, Gravesend Kent DA12 1AU Tel. 01474 33 71 83

Any person wishing to submit representations to my/our application must give notice in writing to the address shown above, giving in detail the grounds of objection by

03/04/2017

The Council will not entertain representations where the writer requests that his identity remains anonymous. Copies of all representations will be included in the papers presented to the Licensing Panel and will therefore pass into the public domain. Representations must relate to one of the four Licensing Objectives: THE PREVENTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER, PUBLIC SAFETY, THE PREVENTION OF PUBLIC NUISANCE AND THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM HARM.

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Lions century for Bell-Drummond

The Kent batsman looked in fine form against Sri Lanka A

Cricket

By Tom Pyman
tom.pyman@archant.co.uk

KENT'S Daniel Bell-Drummond scored his second England Lions century and shared a record-breaking 200-run partnership with Tom Alsop, to secure a first win of the one-day series against Sri Lanka A at the Colombo Cricket Club.

The Lions were in trouble at 12 for two when Alsop joined the county's academy graduate, after the loss of openers Ben Duckett and Keaton Jennings in the same over from Vikum Sanjaya.

But by the time Alsop was dismissed for 96, stumped aiming to reach three figures with a leg-side boundary, the Lions were within sight of a modest victory target, after a good all-round bowling performance in which Middlesex seamer Toby Roland-Jones and debutant Graeme White each took three wickets.

The 21-year-old Hampshire left-hander had faced 105 balls and hit 11 boundaries, and their partnership of exactly 200 was a new record for the third wicket in List A cricket for the Lions or the England A and B teams that preceded them, beating 194 between Ravi Bopara and James Taylor also against Sri Lanka A in Worcester in 2014.

Bell-Drummond reached his century in the next over, after facing 109 balls and stroking 11 boundaries.

The Kent right-hander had top-scored with 51 in the Lions' defeat in the third match of the series in Kurunegala on Monday, and his previous List A century was an unbeaten 171 against Sri Lanka A on home territory in Canterbury last July, when he shared a record-breaking second-wicket partnership with Duckett.

He was dismissed later in the over, bowled by the left-arm spinner Chaturanga de Silva, who was one of several new faces in a reshaped Sri Lanka A team which nevertheless included seven players with senior international experience.

Worcestershire's Joe Clarke also fell cheaply as the Lions experienced a slight wobble, but Lancashire's Liam Livingstone secured the win by five wickets with 16 balls to spare with a powerful straight six which clattered into the scoreboard.

STAR: Daniel Bell-Drummond impressed with the bat as part of the England Lions team in Sri Lanka Pictures: ADY KERRY

Thamesmead move in to share Princes Park

Football

THAMESMEAD Town are to share Princes Town with Dartford for the next five years, it has emerged.

Discussions with the Isthmian League Division One North outfit, located in the boroughs of Bexley and Greenwich, eight miles from the Darts' home ground, have been ongoing for several months.

As well as assisting Thamesmead in re-locating from their previous home at Bayliss Avenue, the two clubs are expected to benefit from an arragement to allow some of Dartford's younger players to get regular games in a competitive environment and at their home ground.

A club spokesperson said: "This will allow [Darts boss] Tony Burman and his management team to keep a closer eye or our players of the future. As a club, we know all too well what it is like to have to share another club's facilities.

"With your support, we hope to make Princes Park a genuine home from home and with incentives to be announced shortly by Thamesmead, allow Dartford fans, who don't travel to away games, the opportunity of watching more games at Princes Park, plus being able to watch some of our young stars of the future on occasions.

"This arrangement is also an opportunity to improve the financial stability of the club, helping us achieve our ultimate goal of becoming a stable and sustainable National League club."

The Darts are currently in the National League South play-off places.

HOME: Princes Park

Sport Shorts

» Email **sports@kosmedia.co.uk** or call **Tom Pyman** on **01233653477**

Haye back home after injury in Bellew defeat

HEAVYWEIGHT David Haye has returned to his Beckenham home after surgery on the Achilles tendon he ruptured in his defeat to Tony Bellew at the weekend.

The 36-year-old, who moved to the town in 2010, underwent an operation on his right leg on Sunday after sustaining the injury in the sixth round of the bout at London's O2 Arena.

"Home from Achilles reattachment surgery. I'm overwhelmed with your positivity, love and support. From the bottom of my heart, thank you all," Haye tweeted.

The injury severely hampered Haye as it rendered him largely immobile and barely able to stay on his feet, suffering official knockdowns in the sixth and 11th rounds amid the numerous times he hit the canvas.

He said: "I always knew he was tough, I always knew he had a big heart and I congratulate him. He did what he needed to do and I would love the opportunity to do it again. The ball is in his court."

FIGHTER: David Haye

STUNNER: Harry Crawford's sublime effort

Dover to face Welling or Charlton in final

WELLING United made it through to the Kent Senior Cup semi-finals this week in dramatic fashion thanks to a stunning late winner.

With the game against local rivals Bromley goalless until 85 minutes, a moment of magic was required to break the deadlock, which Harry Crawford duly delivered.

Similar to David Beckham's famous goal for Manchester United at Wimbledon back in 1996, the forward, who has also played for Dartford and Dover, lobbed the keeper from some 45 yards.

The win means the Wings will now face League One side Charlton Athletic at Park View Road in the semis.

Chris Kinnear's Dover had already booked their place in the final earlier this month.

One in, three out at Hartsdown

FORMER Margate striker Michael Thalassitis has returned to Hartsdown Park to help the Blues in their relegation battle until the end of the season.

The Gate have been rooted at the foot of the National League South table for most of what has been a horrid campaign, in which boss Nikki Bull departed last month.

Thalassitis left the club in November to join Hemel Hempstead having scored three goals for the Thanet outfit after moving from St Albans last summer.

Meanwhile, leaving Hartsdown Park for pastures new this week were midfielders Jake Phillips and Ryan Richefond as well as striker Keanu Williams.

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